

MOVIE MAGIC: GEORGE LUCAS' "WILLOW"

Rod Serling's

August 1988

THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Magazine

"ANGEL FIRE"

**HEAVENLY
NEW
FANTASY
FROM
ANDREW
GREELEY**

**WADE
DAVIS
BEYOND
"SERPENT
AND THE
RAINBOW"**

**PLUS: SEVEN
NEW TALES
OF LINEARTHY
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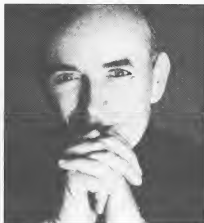
Cover art by Marvin Mattleson

Cover art first appeared on *High Sierra* by W.R. Burnett (Zebra Books, 1987).

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RICHARD DAVIS, L. MORGAN-FITZPATRICK, MARY FLOCK,
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Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine*, (ISSN # 0279-6090) August, 1988, Volume 8, Number 3, is published bimonthly (February, April, June, August, October, December) in the United States and simultaneously in Canada by TZ Publications, a division of Mountain Publishing Corporation, 800 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. Telephone (212) 986-9600. Copyright © 1988 by TZ Publications. Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine* is published pursuant to a license from Carol Serling and Viacom, Inc. All rights reserved. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Return postage must accompany all unsolicited material. The publisher assumes no responsibility for care and return of unsolicited materials. All rights reserved on material accepted for publication unless otherwise specified. All letters sent to Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine* or to its editors are assumed intended for publication. Nothing may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission from the publisher. Any similarity between persons appearing in fiction and real persons living or dead is coincidental. Single copies \$2.50 in U.S., U.S. military bases, and U.S. possessions, \$3.00 elsewhere. Subscriptions: U.S., U.S. military, and U.S. possessions: \$15.50; \$18.50 elsewhere. All orders must be paid in U.S. currency. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Postmaster: Send address changes to Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine*, P.O. Box 252, Mt. Morris, IL 61054-0252. Printed in the U.S.A.

IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE



Andrew M. Greeley



Ron Howard



Jean "Moebius" Giraud

"HOW MANY ANGELS CAN DANCE ON THE head of a pin?" That's the question Nobel Prize-winning biologist Sean Desmond asks his dinner companion in our exclusive preview of Andrew M. Greeley's new fantasy novel, *Angel Fire*. In this case, it's not an academic question, since Desmond's companion is, in fact, an angel, in the guise of a beautiful (and desirable) woman. By putting an angel in the modern world, Father Greeley allows himself room for speculation on a variety of topics: Do angels feel love—and desire? Are they extraterrestrial beings? Is human evolution directed toward becoming more angelic? And if there are angels, are there also devils and demons? These are speculations that would seem daring even from an author who is not a Roman Catholic priest.

In our special section on the making of George Lucas's newest film, *Willow*, an epic quest fantasy in the tradition of Tolkien, Contributing Editor James Verniere goes behind the scenes to explore the origins of the film. Verniere talks with its director, Ron Howard, whose previous films include *Splash* and *Cocoon*. We also feature a portfolio of never-before-seen production art by French artist Jean Giraud, better known as "Moebius," whose fantastic sketches made a major contribution to the "look" of *Willow*. (A selection of some of Moebius's best work can be seen in a new multivolume series of color art books recently published in the U.S. by Marvel Comics.)

One man whose adventures into the unknown cross very near to the realm of fantasy is Wade Davis, the Harvard "ethnobotanist" whose book, *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, claimed that real-life zombies may exist in the darker parts of Haiti and the Caribbean. In his conversation with Davis, Stanley Wiater discusses his reactions to the Wes Craven horror-adventure film based on his book, and explores a lesser-known side to the adventurer—a man passionately committed to the preservation of the wilderness, and the cultures which flourish there.

Our fiction mix this issue ranges from dark terror to light comedy, with new tales from Barbara Owens, Michael Blumlein, Roger Parson, John Maclay, Craig Kee Strete, and Kevin Cook. Incidentally, our "TZ First" this issue, a novelette by Michael Galloglach titled "All in a Day's Work," has two things in common with Andrew Greeley's *Angel Fire*. Both its author and its protagonist are Irish Catholics—of a sort. However, in Galloglach's case, the heroine is a young witch struggling to make it in contemporary New York, and the creatures she encounters are demons, not angels....

This issue also features a profile by James H. Burns of Jeannot Szwarc, who directed more than twenty episodes of *Rod Serling's Night Gallery*; and an encore of Ron Goulart's "Goulart Archipelago" column. And Craig Miller, one of our sources for our "Hollywood Grapevine" column, sheds his anonymi-

ty this issue to comment on the *Twilight Zone* movie trial, and the current Writers Guild Strike.

Backstage at TZ

The results of our 1988 *Twilight Zone* Readers' Survey have started coming in, and, as usual, you were very clear about your likes and dislikes. (Special thanks are due to David Dow, our Antioch College intern this spring, for collating the survey.) We'll be reporting on the results in detail next issue. We should also note that we've had to drop the four-page color insert from this issue. We hope to restore it in the future.

Finally, we'd like to report on a few staff changes here in the *Twilight Zone*. Robert Simpson, who wrote several of your favorite nonfiction features, including "Magic in the Streets" and "Children of the Night," joins us this issue as Assistant Editor. (He's also editing our new "TZ Screening Room" section on current fantasy film releases.) Peter R. Emshwiller, our Managing Editor, has taken on additional duties, including editing our "Illuminations" section. Cecelia Giunta, who joined us a few months ago as Promotion Manager, has been helping us spread the word about the magazine at conventions and in the media. (As always, of course, Carol Serling remains as our Associate Publisher, Consulting Editor, and TZ's own "guardian angel.")

We hope you have a heavenly time this issue, and hope to see you again in October.

EDITOR'S NOTES

TAPPAN KING

THE DREAMWEAVERS' GUILD

ONCE, IN A KINGDOM LONG AGO AND far away, a beautiful young Queen sat in the throne room of a run-down, ramshackle castle, listening to her two oldest advisors debating where to build the new palace.

"According to my most precise and accurate calculations," said the Royal Engineer, "the only logical site is the crest of Wildwood Hill. It not only commands a strategic view of the valley, but it has excellent drainage as well."

"But, my lady," cried the Court Astrologer, "Wildwood Hill is a fell, ill-omened place. None of your subjects will dare to go there. We must build it instead in the sacred grove at the heart of the Blue Fen."

"Pah! Superstitious folderol!" said the Engineer. "The place is a swamp!"

"Stop your bickering!" shouted the Queen. "You see only facts and figures," she said to the Royal Engineer, "and you, Astrologer, see only signs and portents. I have promised a purse of gold to the one who resolves this problem. But I am losing my patience!"

At that moment, a voice spoke from the back of the hall.

"Perhaps I can be of some help."

"Who spoke? Come forward so I may see you," said the Queen.

A young man stepped forward, dressed in a cloak the color of twilight.

"Well, speak!" said the Queen. "Who are you?"

"My name is not important. I am a member of the Guild of Dreamweavers. We have special skills for dealing with such problems as these."

"I know of no such guild," said the Engineer, coldly.

"Silence!" said the Queen. "Very well, show me these special skills of yours."

"Let me tell you a story," said the young man.

"By all means," said the Queen.

"Once, in a long-ago, far-away kingdom, a King had a problem very similar to your own."

"What was this kingdom called?" asked the Astrologer, sharply.

"Yff," replied the young man, after a moment's thought.

"And how did he resolve this problem," asked the Queen, "this King of the Kingdom of-Yff?"

"Since the only problem with the site the Engineer recommended was its ill luck, the King commanded his Astrologer to hold a sacred rite on that site, to clear it of its bad omens."

"And the purse of gold?" asked the Queen. "There was a purse of gold, was there not?" At this, the Engineer and the Astrologer looked at the young man with dark and anxious looks.

"Most assuredly," the young man answered. "The gold was divided between them, since they had each contributed to the solution."

The Queen smiled with pleasure and surprise, and the two advisors sighed in relief. "An excellent suggestion. Let it be done immediately." The Engineer and the Astrologer left together, heatedly discussing the details, leaving the young man alone with the Queen.

"You have done well, young man," said the Queen. "But if you had this solution all along, why didn't you claim the prize for yourself?"

The young man smiled. "There are far greater prizes," he replied, kneeling to kiss her hand, "that a man might wish to gain."

THE EVENTS YOU HAVE JUST READ, NEVER took place. Nevertheless, they are true.

At times it seems as if the world is firmly divided, like that mythical kingdom, between the skeptics and the true believers of one sort or another. Often

we are forced to choose, as that young Queen was, between accepting "things as they are" and believing blindly in magic. It would be wonderful if there were a third way of thinking—one that allowed us to experience impossible events without losing touch with reality.

As it happens, there is. There is an ancient philosophical system, as old as either physics or metaphysics, that does precisely that. This school of thought is not only carefully and elaborately worked out, it has hundreds of thousands of practitioners all over the world—a real Guild of Dreamweavers. Some are masters at their discipline, others are merely novices. But every member of the Guild possesses that special skill that bridges the worlds of the real and unreal.

The discipline is called fiction.

If you think about it, fiction offers a valid third position on the nature of reality—at once critical and questioning, believing and accepting, a *conditional* philosophy that allows the impossible just long enough to imagine its effects. That position is clear in the way we use the word "story" to mean both something untrue ("Tell me a story") and something true ("What's the story?").

By telling a story, the young man in the tale illuminated a solution to a problem that seemed, at first, unsolvable. In the same way, the story above dramatizes the point of this essay—that storytelling itself can unite the two worlds of reason and faith, by creating a region where those two worlds join. The nature of that region was perhaps best described by one of the Guild's greatest Dreamweavers:

"It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call —The Twilight Zone." ■

BOOKS

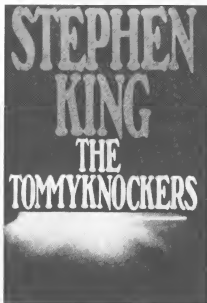
EDWARD BRYANT

An exercise in creative literary history regarding The Tommyknockers — plus diverse horrors and wonders.

The Tommyknockers by Stephen King
Faerie Tale by Raymond E. Feist
The Scream by John Skipp and Craig Spector
Valley of Lights by Stephen Gallagher
Desolation Road by Ian McDonald
Empire Dreams by Ian McDonald
Eddy Deco's Last Caper by Gahan Wilson

If *The Tommyknockers* (Putnam, \$19.95, 558 pp., ISBN 0-399-13314-3) had been published in 1958, Stephen King would now be known as one of the classic sf writers of that silver age, the fifties. I guarantee it. This is not, I hasten to add, intended as an insult. I am merely launching into a few remarks about King's latest novel by pointing out the resonant chord struck in my head (not having a metal plate placed therein).

The Tommyknockers is a stepchild of that great twilight period between the flowering of the young Isaac Asimov and Robert Heinlein, and the advent of Harlan Ellison and Samuel R. Delany. It was a time of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *I Am Legend*, *The Puppet Masters*, *Three to Conquer*, and any number of paranoid sf movie invasion epics. Innocence joined with what were



perceived as hard-nosed political realities. There were few situations in fiction that couldn't be addressed with human pluck and resourcefulness, even though the humans didn't always triumph.

Imagine, if you will, a fictitious meeting early in 1957. Two men sit across from one another in a vinyl booth in some nameless Greenwich Village diner. One man is Theodore Sturgeon. Sturgeon is known as one of the great humanists of modern science fiction, believing much more strongly in the depiction of emotion, particularly love, than shiny hardware. What Sturgeon loves is people.

The other man is Will F. Jenkins, scarcely in print anymore, but once a

household word, a filler of paperback racks as "Murray Leinster." Jenkins is the absolutely consummate Yankee tinkerer in sf. He believes devoutly in the virtue of resourcefulness, of good old American get-up-off-your-duff and do it. Leinster's characters rarely have faces, but they do have an abundance of perseverance and common sense. He intends them to be mirrors for readers who wish to immerse themselves in a fast, involving, melodramatic plot. Readers impose their own features on the protagonists. Then they go out and jury-rig a stardrive with chewing gum, baling wire, and a barlow knife. Someday their children will shop by mail from Brookstone catalogues.

Sturgeon is frequently beset by writer's block. Jenkins is incredibly prolific. The artist and the craftsman; they appear utterly complementary. At the time, it seems like a good idea to collaborate. Each can add to the project what he does best: Sturgeon will supply the heart; Jenkins, the brain and gritty crawl.

It's a long day, but an exciting one. The plot is roughed out: successful writer of westerns, Bobbi Anderson, is out looking for firewood with her faithful dog when she literally stumbles over a chunk of metal projecting from the forest floor. Jenkins isn't so sure about making their female protagonist a novelist. Sturgeon answers that he wants her to be tough and resourceful. "Sort of a combination of Lee Hoffman and Leigh Brackett," he says.

The plot will call for Bobbi to start digging around the odd metal, and

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BOOKS

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eventually to discover that the projection is only the tiniest portion of an immense buried spaceship. Not only that, but some mysterious force from the ship is starting to control her; worse, to change her. To what, she doesn't know. This is a matter that greatly concerns Jim Gardener, a drunken poet and Bobbi's friend and lover. The alien voices from the ancient ship don't bother Jim, presumably because of the steel plate he's carried in his skull since a horrendous ski accident. But he watches as not only Bobbi, but also the entire population of the small town of Haven, Maine, start to be affected by the alien intelligence. They are all changing both mentally and physically, but into what? And why? Jim realizes he's living—to put it bluntly—with a monster from outer space. But that is a situation moderated by the love that still exists between them.

"Not too much of the sex angle," warns Jenkins.

Sturgeon just smiles quietly.

"Hey, Ted!" yells the counterman, holding up the telephone. "Somebody name of Pole Anderson callin' long-distance for you."

"Paul Anderson," Sturgeon corrects him. When he returns to the table, he tells Jenkins that he—Sturgeon—asked Anderson for some thoughts about the nature of the alien presence in the spaceship. "Poul says he's writing a story inverting the usual plot about the super-intelligent spacemen. This time, a starship with totally dumb aliens arrives on Earth. A star-faring culture doesn't have to be brilliant, just able to diligently do the same job over a longer period of time, a culture of engineers rather than scientists. Anyhow, Poul says we can use the basic idea. You can't copyright those."

"Sounds good to me," says Jenkins.

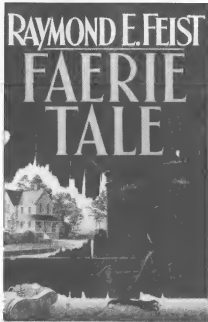
The dialogue continues. The two go to work in earnest. Months pass. The novel is sold and published. It becomes a minor classic. It has a solidly crafted plot, something like New England furniture where the joints hardly show at all. The narrative voice is friendly, speaking to the readers in the tone of an old-time storyteller sitting by a campfire. The characters are sympathetic and engaging. They bleed psychologically as well as physically. Collaborations sometimes display the worst of each contributing party. This novel displays the best. Both Jenkins and Sturgeon remember the book fondly in the years they

have left.

The novel immensely impresses the young Stephen King, when he scarfs it up along with a slug of other paperback originals such as *War with the Gizmos* and *The Monster from Earth's End*. He thinks to himself, *I wish I could have written this*.

And so, in this alternate world, our alternate world, he has.

King has written an engaging tale; an eighties version of what that imaginary Sturgeon-Jenkins collaboration would



have been like if it had been written. Sure, King's novel has its derivative elements; but it's not slavish imitation, rather a comfortable synthesis of familiar elements. *The Tommyknockers* entertains, occasionally affects, and performs its job like a seasoned trooper whose features are vaguely familiar. I frankly don't think the novel would be on the best-seller list in the eighties were it not for the magic by-line. But that's not the point. The point is that the book is solid and satisfying, and the author should be no more ashamed for writing it than we are for reading and enjoying it.

Observers of the technical aspects of the Stephen King Writing and Publishing Phenomenon have any number of things to ponder in *The Tommyknockers*. On the trivial side, it can again be observed that King novels seem to be copyedited less than others' work. At one point, Jim Gardener is hired at X dollars to work for a poetry roadshow in Maine. Two pages later, he's being paid Y dollars. Then there's Bobbi Anderson, who loses all her teeth, but miraculously regains them a hundred pages later. I mention such things be-

cause they, by God, distract readers from the literary matters at hand. Considering how many bright liberal arts graduates drift around the Big Apple looking for employment in publishing, you'd think more might lend some competence to the crucial draywork of copyediting and proofreading.

On the other hand, students of the King Method should pay particular attention in *The Tommyknockers* to the author's frequent ignoring of standard linear plot. He fools around a lot with overlapping time sequences, but it never gets confusing. The trick seems simple, but it's the very devil to accomplish. King also does wonders with seeming to wander light years away on plot and character tangents, only to weave everything tightly back into the warp, somewhat the way John D. MacDonald did. It's impressive to see the intelligence at work.

As happens frequently nowadays in King's work, there are a variety of self-referential details (in-jokes, we used to call them). There are nods toward *Cujo* and other Maine landscapes. Especially noticeable is King's reworking of that final heat-grabbing scene in the last two pages of *The Dead Zone* when Johnny Smith seems to touch the shoulder of his surviving love. It works in *The Tommyknockers*, too. Hey, I got a lump in my throat.

Finally, it's good to have an example of Stephen King once again expanding his perimeter of endeavors. Though it has its gruesome moments, *The Tommyknockers* is not a horror novel. Neither is it mainstream suspense. It's out-and-out, straight-ahead science fiction.

And I hope it will not be perceived as a slam when I say I would have voted it for a 1958 Hugo.

The Magic Goes Awry

Raymond E. Feist, he of the best-selling Rift War fantasy saga, has entered the big-time horror market with a highly promoted hardback from Doubleday. It's called *Faerie Tale* (\$17.95, 415 pp., ISBN 0-385-23623-9) and it adheres to a tried-and-true formula successful for any number of embossed-cover paperbacks over the past few years: urban family with kids moves out to the sticks. They encounter evil. Corruption threatens the children. The adults are put in peril of their lives, if not their very souls as well.

Faerie Tale looks right in. Successful screenwriter Phil Hastings, his wife, teenage daughter, and eight-year-old twin boys all move from Southern California to the Old Kessler Place out in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 87

SCREEN

GAHAN WILSON

Two recipes for the macabre—a bit fudged, but nonetheless tasty.

The Serpent and the Rainbow (Universal)
Consuming Passions (Samuel Goldwyn)

WES CRAVEN'S FILMS VARY WIDELY, YOU MIGHT even say wildly, in direction and success, financial and artistic, but I have always made a point of seeing them. It was not all that easy in the days when they were obscure and needed a bit of tracking down. But even when a film of his fails in trying to reach whatever odd goal Craven's set for it—and a number have been set for very odd goals, indeed—I have never seen a one of them that was not an interesting try.

Craven is now well past the early, scabbling days and need no longer shoot his films in swamps. His creation of the lucrative Freddy in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* appears to have sunk firmly into the sloping craniums of the Hollywood suit brigade, for they have deemed him bankable and will now give him money with a minimum of sleazy strings attached. So, being the explorer that he is, Craven is taking advantage of his new situation and swinging his creative net wider.

The Undead Zone

The Serpent and the Rainbow is based on a book by Wade Davis, a genuine eccentric of the old school who is a scientist, a bit of a swaggerer, and a roaring tale-spinner (what a fine old granddad he'll make for some wide-eyed kid!). Some years back, after learning that a man had turned up as a patient in a Port-au-Prince hospital years after he had been declared dead by a physician



TOUGH AS NAILS: Zakes Mokae as *Serpent and the Rainbow's* devilish villain.

and then buried by an undertaker, Davis ventured into Baby Doc's Haiti in order to track down rumors concerning zombies and their possible reality.

After some considerable risk to life and limb, he learned that they did indeed exist, and that they were the victims of a nasty poison concocted from a wide variety of scary items, including human flesh. In the end, Davis and his team of Boston scientists discovered that the essential ingredient in the manufacture of that poison was extracted from the skin of the puffer fish, the very same one which is presently so popular in Japan and has accounted for the demise of numerous gourmands along the Ginza.

Mr. Davis's book is plenty spooky

and full of sinister folk who are, one way or another, involved in the zombie biz, but though he does speculate rather carefully on the possible validity of aspects of Voodoo and its gods (particularly the lovely Erzulie), Davis's magicians don't really work the sort of magic you get when you have cinematic special effects. Like the Wizard of Oz, to cite a somewhat milder practitioner of the art, they are only clever shamans/showmen who have surrounded their few secrets with such a dazzling combination of hocus-pocus and philosophical truth that you can't find the borderlines for all the smoke and mirrors.

Our Mr. Craven, of course, has no such timid compunctions, and he certainly does have special effects, so his

Serpent and the Rainbow magicians are magicians and have a lot more going for them than puffer fish extractions. They can turn your soul into rainbows and put them into little bottles, and they can make you say impolite and menacing announcements in their voice and then force you to reach over the table right in the middle of a perfectly respectable dinner party in order to stab a houseguest with your steak knife, and they can do such things not only in Haiti, but in Boston, no less!

Of course, none of this stops Craven's hero (played by Bill Pullman, in very convincing Wade Davis manner), though it sure does occasionally slow him down, particularly when his activities attract the full attention of the film's chief villain who, not content with being the evil of the island's evil magicians, fills his spare time with the duties imposed upon him as the chief and head torturer of Baby Doc's terrifying secret police, the *Tontons Macoute*.

This excellent rogue is played with great gusto and in big style by Zakes Mokoae. Mokoae's monster is nicely unveiled in layers by the movie so that although you are most firmly aware he is a thoroughly bad lot from your first peek at him, the full extent of his nastiness and the richness and range of his evil abilities only dawns on you by degrees. He is particularly sprightly when working with his chief prop, a horrible wooden chair, equipped with uncomfortable-looking ropes and straps. The sight of Mokoae ecstatically nailing victims to his chair is the best example of glorious, free-wheeling, fiendish misuse of furniture I've seen since good old Tod Browning enthusiastically sliced open the throats of those unhappy patrons of his who were foolish enough to have sat themselves in the revolving chair (it dumped you down into the basement when you were dead, where you would then be made into meat pies) of *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.

A number of other excellent black actors are on view in *Serpent*. Among them, Brent Jennings has a ball as the rascally sorcerer cutely called "Mozart," who runs up a batch of Zombie-making powder, but only after a series of minor scams fall through. (The potion involves using the head of the withered mummy of an ancient sorcerer, creepily buried in a veil and a white, lacy, bridal dress, who turns out to be the spookiest thing in the movie—one I would nominate as a strong contender for being another Freddy.) Paul Winfield nicely demonstrates the complexities of being a good priest/magician in



FULL-BODIED FLAVOR: In *Consuming Passions*, perfect chocolate has its Pryce.

a totally corrupt society, and Cathy Tyson continues to build a reputation well started in *Mona Lisa* as the doctor-heroine (and occasional "possessee" by Voodoo gods) who is attempting to find a logical resting place between the world views offered by contemporary science and contemporary magic.

The weakness of the film is in its attempt to weave together the quest of the hero-scientist and the vast, surrounding collapse of the Duvalier regime. It was a good idea to try it; the two sagas resonate logically, but the script is not polished enough to pull the job off successfully. I am not sure whether it's because there's too much or too little of the larger historical event shown (that would take a few more story conferences), but it's one or the other, and the result is that the little plot and the big plot don't quite integrate and the action gets blurry and confused. The effect is more or less as if I *Walked with a Zombie* started turning into *Gone with the Wind* halfway through the action. I'm not saying such a project couldn't be accomplished, mind, but it is not achieved here.

Outside of that, I enjoyed the movie very much, and, as usual, am eagerly awaiting to see what Wes Craven does next. Who knows? Maybe, one day, he will pull off a spooky *Gone with the Wind*. More power to him.

A Matter of Taste

My attention was drawn to *Consuming Passions* because it's based on a play by Michael Palin and Terry Jones

of Monty Python fame and stars Jonathan Pryce; and I had a sneaking wish it might therefore, in spite of lacking Terry Gilliam, turn out to be another *Brazil*.

Such, unfortunately, is not the case, but *Passions* is amusing, nonetheless. I might even go so far as to credit it with being in raucous bad taste, and it certainly is bizarre enough to qualify for inclusion in a review for a magazine specializing in the bizarre.

The thing starts out mildly enough as an almost gentle spoofing of the confusion between fabrication and reality which seems to have infected Western culture, perhaps terminally. The movie could have taken our contemporary plague of political or religious bunkum as its text, but, possibly at random, it has chosen commerce instead.

Specifically, it has chosen Chumley's Chocolate Factory, one of those dear, old-timey British outfits which we Americans like to believe are somehow still unspoiled. We know our own chocolate factories are spoiled because we drive past the filthy, collapsing things on our thoroughways and see the speckled green smoke and the oily waters pouring out of them. But when we look at those quaint, doughy old country labels, we think of real cows making real milk and of real people—possibly wearing some sort of peasant costumes—mixing the stuff into real chocolate.

The movie starts off with a palpably fraudulent television ad showing the president of Chumley's (played with appropriate desperation by Freddie

CONTINUED ON PAGE 83

LETTERS

I AM AN AS-YET UNPUBLISHED AUTHOR OF poetry and fiction, as well as a sketch artist and fledgling sculptor. I've been a fan of the *Twilight Zone* and the now defunct (Sob!) *Night Cry* magazines for years, although I dig up weird stories and art wherever they present themselves.

Despite my interests I consider myself the world's biggest skeptic. However, one strange concept has recently



wormed its way past my defenses into the part of my brain which I reserve for dealing with reality. (A small portion. Reality's not my favorite part of life!)

It seems downright beyond the mathematics of coincidence how some things come in streaks and/or otherwise tie together, as if by invisible strings. I believe this comes under the heading of Carl Jung's theory of synchronicity. Here's an example: The February 1988 issue of *Twilight Zone* features eyes peering from broken eggshells on the cover. I've been bouncing around the idea of painting eyes on eggshells in only the last two weeks. There are several other startling examples of this

kind of coincidence for me in that issue alone. Anyone else out there had these experiences? I'd love to hear from you.

MIKE R. DOHOHOE
1217 Corrales Road
Corrales, NM 87048

THIS YEAR MY HUSBAND AND I SUBSCRIBED to seven different magazines. *The Twilight Zone* was one of them. Yours is the only one we really look forward to and probably the only one we will renew next year. The only problem is your magazine is so interesting I read it too fast and then have to wait two long months for another. I vote you go monthly.

Keep up the good work!

HEIDE R. JAKSHA
Lyle, WA

I AM A RECENT SUBSCRIBER TO THE *Twilight Zone*, although I have been buying the magazine off the newsstand since the first issue was published, and I enjoy reading it very much.

I read with interest the article in the April 1988 issue relating to Reagan and the "zero factor." Although no rational explanation was given (nor is it necessarily possible), I do recall reading several years ago an article that dealt with this subject. Although I can't recall the specific details, the gist of the article was that during the 1820s an American Indian leader of some influence had returned from a trip to Washington to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 91

We welcome letters on any subject of interest to our readers. All letters must contain your name and address and are assumed to be intended for publication, unless you request otherwise. Letters submitted become the property of the Publisher, and we reserve the right to edit them for length or suitability. Send letters to TZ LETTERS DEPARTMENT, 800 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017.

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ILLUMINATIONS

RICHARD SHAVER—PROPHET OF THE NEW AGE?

It all started with an alphabet that came in the mail—

In 1944, Raymond A. Palmer (1910-1977), editor of the science fiction magazine *Amazing Stories*, opened an envelope and found, not a story manuscript, but a clumsily typed "alphabet" from a man who remembered the ancient lost land of Lemuria!

The alphabet was the work of a Pennsylvania welder, Richard Sharpe Shaver (1907-1975), and purported to be the key to the ancient language of "Mantong," the universal tongue not only of ancient civilizations, but of numerous other planets as well.

Curiously, the ancients spoke totally modern English, using modern letters. Shaver's "alphabet" was merely a list of the hidden meanings of letters. Thus, to an ancient Lemurian, the word MUD meant "Man YOU Disintegrate."

After several such experiences, Palmer was convinced. He requested more information, and received back a strange document which he rewrote and published in *Amazing* as *I Remember Lemuria!*

The Shaver Mystery was born. Story after story appeared under Shaver's byline, purporting to tell the "true" history of the ancient Earth. Why publish this disguised as fiction? Because sinister forces of conspiracy prevented the truth from getting out!

In ancient times, according to Shaver, the sun began to emit harmful radiations which caused the previously immortal people of the mighty "Atlan" and "Titan" civilizations to age and die. They retreated into caverns as much as four hundred miles deep, a veritable inner world vaster than the Earth's surface, but to no avail.

Most of the ancients eventually fled into deep space, but radiation-crazed "deros" (degenerative robots) still lurk in the caverns to this day, manipulating world events with their "telaug" mind-rays, causing everything from train wrecks to world wars. A few benevolent "teros" (integrative robots) survive also, and Shaver claimed to be in contact with them via telepathy and by dropping his shoes on the floor loudly enough to get their attention.

Soon thousands of readers wrote in confirming Shaver's experiences. They too heard the voices from the caves. Shaver

adherents everywhere began to explore underground openings and demand that the U.S. military send a division of marines down to rout the deros before it was too late.

In 1949 editor Palmer left *Amazing* and his successor killed the Shaver series "because it stank up the place." Cynics suggested that it had been a mere circulation-getting ploy.

But Shaver and Palmer devoted the rest of their lives to this and other mysteries. Palmer founded *Fate* magazine and later the nearly all-Shaver *Hidden World*, which was a formative influence on "UFOlogy." Shaver himself was last heard from selling "rock books," photographs of split-open boulders which (to non-telaug-clouded minds at least) told the history of the Earth in more than geological detail. Later Shaver revelations from the caves even included a two hundred thousand-word inside story of the life of Christ, complete with the inevitable mind-rays and caves.

Deluded ravings? Shaver was almost certainly schizophrenic. In a 1958 article Palmer told of an eerie incident in which Shaver talked coherently in his sleep in four distinct voices. And, shortly before his own death, Palmer revealed that during the time Shaver claimed to have been in the caves talking with the deros, he was actually in a mental hospital, catatonic. Yet Palmer also proclaimed Shaver one of the most brilliant scientific minds of the age.

Taken as an occult visionary, Shaver was the man who came early. Today, you might see his smiling face on the cover of *Time*. He forms an important link between the classic occultism of James Churchwood (*The Lost Continent of Mu*, et al.) and Madame Blavatsky (the founder of Theosophy) and the Moderns.

In the drab, war-torn mid-forties, before anyone had heard of flying saucers, ancient astronauts, or healing crystals, Shaver told of wonders: caverns filled with awesome machines, new theories of time and space, voices from unimaginable antiquity.

Does anyone still hear those voices today, or has the dero mind-ray stifled us all?

—Darrell Schweitzer



ILLUMINATIONS

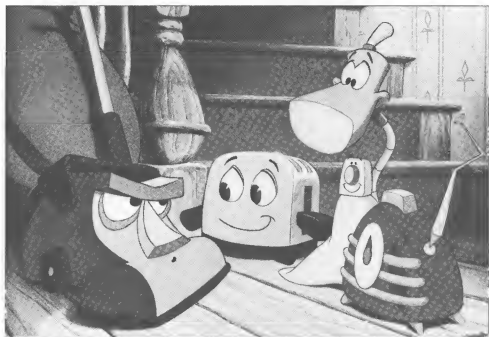


PHOTO © 1987 DISNEY CHANNEL

DISCHING UP DISNEY

Once upon a time, a man named Tom wrote a gentle fantasy about five stout-hearted appliances who went off on a journey in the Big Wide World, to look for their missing master. Tom's tale was printed up by some nice folks in Cornwall, Connecticut, was nominated for something wonderful called a Nebula, and then more nice people working at a place called Doubleday turned the story into a children's book with lots of pictures. This all made the man named Tom (who wrote lots and lots of books and stories for a living) really glad, and he lived happily ever...

For respected, award-winning science fiction writer Thomas M. Disch, best known for his insightful, biting, terrifying, and—yes—decidedly *decadent* visions, the acclaim generated by his 1980 novella *The Brave Little Toaster* may well have seemed like a fairy tale come

true. Disch had created a modern fairy tale for adults. But the magic didn't end there, for an animated version of the novella premiered at the 1987 International Festival of Animation to enthusiastic reviews. (A sequel, *The Brave Little Toaster Goes to Mars*, was just published by Doubleday.)

The ninety-minute film was the result of a true labor of love on the part of Joe Ramft (scriptwriter/animation supervisor), Brian McEntee (art director), Jerry Rees (scriptwriter/director), and A. Kendall O'Connor (color stylist), who had worked on *Snow White*, among other Disney Studios features. Faces for the anthropomorphized adventurers came from old model Sunbeam and Sears appliances, while the voices were supplied by Jon (*Saturday Night Live*) Lovitz and members of L.A.'s improvisational theatre troupe The Groundlings (as well as a nine-year-old named Timothy E. Day

as Blanky).

The result of this melding of creativity debuted on cable TV on February 27, 1988, as a Disney Channel Discovery. An unusual place to see work inspired by the author of such gripping adult fare as *The Businessman*, "The Roaches," and *Camp Concentration*, to be sure. Yet what better way to introduce children to the more-than-slightly warped genius of Thomas M. Disch?

—A.R. Morlan

KING'S ENGLISH

Since 1982, the most elusive Stephen King book for most collectors has been the first volume of his Dark Tower series, *The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger*. That is about to change with NAL's publication of the book in trade paperback this fall, but even before that, the book is available to readers in a very special way.

NAL's audio division has released *The Dark Tower*:

The Gunslinger in an unabridged audiocassette program, running a little over six hours on four cassettes, retailing for \$29.95. The reader—Stephen King himself.

King explained his decision to read his own work (a fair selection of his stories have been released on cassettes read by others) in this way: "The audio Reader's Digest Condensed Books make me want to barf. . . . I listen to audio cassettes all the time while I'm driving—the unabridged ones, that is—and find they're a great time-passer when you're fed up with ads for the funny-car races at the local dragway interspersed with repeated playing of the latest George Michael song or George Harrison braying 'I got me 'mind . . . set . . . on . . . yew!'"

King was also influenced by a recording of William Golding reading his classic novel *The Lord of the Flies*. "There was a quality to the reading, a light, that I thought more than outbalanced the fact that he wasn't a professional 'voice,'" King said. "I decided the reason for that quality was simply that he 'felt' the book more truly than anyone else could."

In two series of sessions about eight months apart, King read both *The Gunslinger* and its recent followup, *The Dark Tower II: The Drawing of the Three*, at the studios of his radio station, WZON, about two minutes from his home in Bangor, Maine.

Although the publisher

has added music and sound effects to the tapes, the readings are, as King puts it, "pretty much bare bones. After all, there are no sound effects or music playing in the background when you read a novel to yourself. (Although I have a dismal idea that sooner or later some airhead will want to give it a try—after all, he'll say, they put those nifty little chips that play 'Have a Holly-Jolly Christmas' in greeting cards, don't they?) Novels, in my humble opinion, should remain novels."

Given the scarcity of copies of this book, this audio version seems virtually assured of success, particularly with the added inducement of hearing it read by King. But, however it turns out, King says he'll be content.

"If my readings of these two books are well received," he says, "I may well want to do some of the others, either through NAL or through my own Philtrum Press. If, on the other hand, the verdict of critics and general readers is that the recordings are an audio version of *Maximum Overdrive*, I'll be able to say goodbye to the concept without much pain, and leave the job to more professional readers."

—Tyson Blue

WANTED: STERLING SERLING

Robert Batscha would like to have a look in your attic. He wonders if Rod Serling might be up there—or Desi and Lucy, if not President Harry Truman.

Batscha is president of the Museum of Broadcasting in

New York City. The museum collects old-time radio and TV shows the same as book libraries accumulate books.

"Like all museums, we are constantly searching for missing works," Batscha explained. And that's where the nation's attics figure into this.

The museum is looking for a copy of "Escape from the Cave," a TV drama Serling wrote before *The Twilight Zone*. And "The Storm," a 1950-53 series he wrote that was produced for local broadcast in Cincinnati.

"People often don't realize they have the only copy of some long-lost and treasured TV show," Batscha said. It makes sense to suppose the networks kept copies of everything, or at least copies of all the good stuff. But early-day television was done live, and it was hard to record and expensive to save.

Here is some of what is still missing:

—The 1951 pilot episode

of *I Love Lucy*, an early-day rarity that predates the arrival of Fred and Ethel.

—Truman's 1947 address, the first-ever Presidential address televised from the White House.

—Johnny Carson's debut as the host of *The Tonight Show*.

"We have to realize that we have a history of television," Batscha said. "Just as we have a history of literature and painting."

"Rod Serling: Dimensions of Imagination" was a recent exhibit devoted to Serling's TV work, some of which the Museum has brought to light by just the sort of snooping around that is going on right now, right here.

Have a look around the house, okay? If anything turns up that belongs to the history of television, let the Museum of Broadcasting know at One East 53rd St., New York, NY 10022.

—Ron Wolfe



PHOTO BY CHRISTINE LYONS

Etc.

Every week or so, another letter arrives here with a reference to the use of the phrase "the twilight zone" in magazines, books and the media. Maybe it's just the times we're living in, but recent citations seem to have taken on a slightly darker edge. Here are two examples:

In the April 1988 issue of *The Atlantic*, in an article entitled "Did the Universe Just Happen?" Robert Wright profiles computer scientist Edward Fredkin, an eccentric self-made millionaire whose theories about the universe are startling and innovative: *Fredkin works in a twilight zone of modern science*," says Wright, "the interface of computer science and physics. Fredkin thinks the universe itself is a computer. According to his theory of 'digital physics,' information is more fundamental than matter and energy..."

Amy Virshup, writing in the March 14 issue of *New York Magazine*, surveys the hippest spots in the city's ever-changing club scene—late-night, post-punk "dim age" clubs like Nell's, the Tunnel, the World—and *The Twilight Zone* (!). "It looks like an after-hours club, with its black walls painted with Day-Glo planets, its battered furniture, and an upstairs room definitely not for the claustrophobic. Saturdays only: no one shows up here until four. It resembles nothing so much as a frat house for insomniacs."

ILLUMINATIONS

TOMMYKNOCKER ROAD



"This highway leads to the shadowy tip of reality. You're on a through route to the land of the different, the bizarre, the unexplainable. Go as far as you like on this road. Its limits are only those of the mind itself..."

Though these words, written by Rod Serling as an opening for *The Twilight Zone*, were never used on the air, they reveal a truth about that land of substance and shadow we all understand instinctively—that it lies closer than we think, just a few miles down the next road, in Homewood ("Walking Distance"), or over the next hill in Peaceful Valley ("Valley of the Shadow"), or out on Highway 11 in Pennsylvania ("The Hitchhiker"). But such

roads exist in the real world as well....

There's something about a dark, deserted highway in the dead of night that conjures our deepest fears. Nowhere is that feeling of solitary terror more intense than on the 287-mile stretch of Highway 50 that cuts across the desolate northern part of the state of Nevada. So bleak is that highway that the Nevada legislature has designated it "The Loneliest Road in America."

There are only a handful of inhabited towns along that entire expanse. You can travel for hours without seeing a living soul. "Late at night, you can stop your car in the middle of the road, and look for miles either way, and there won't be any-

one else out there," says Rich Moreno, a Nevada state official. "There are dozens of towns that no longer exist—ghost towns—along that part of the highway. You can see the ruins of them as you drive along."

Motorists driving along that road have reported hearing strange noises, seeing odd lights and moving figures among the ramshackle ruins of those once-prosperous mining towns. State officials say it's most likely curiosity seekers, or drifters looking for shelter. And yet...

That part of Nevada is also Tommyknocker country. Long before Stephen King gave the name to his own sort of nasties, Tommyknockers were the wild West's version of Eastern Eu-

rope's kobolds and gnomes—wizened, gnarled creatures who were said to live in the abandoned mines and tunnels that honeycomb the underground below those ghost towns, rapping on the shafts and beams in their own strange, secret code. Little wonder most motorists speed up when they pass those towns by.

But Nevada is fighting back. They've developed a "Highway 50 Survival Kit" to help travelers make the trek. Five towns along the highway—Ferley, Fallon, Austin, Eureka, and Ely—are marked as way stations on the map included with the kit, which also includes aspirins, Band-Aids, and a guide to the territory. Tourists who stop in all five towns to have their maps validated will receive a certificate from the Office of the Governor, congratulating them on their perseverance and pioneer spirit.

But they'll also receive something more important in those small desert towns—a touch of light, of warmth, of human companionship to speed their journey through that land of ghosts and shadows.

—Ron Wolfe

PHOTO © 1983 PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Do you have information on unusual phenomena, bizarre happenings, or places where reality tips over into the Twilight Zone? We welcome submissions of 200 words or less to our "Illuminations" section, and will pay \$25 and up for items used. Send them to Peter R. Enshueller, Illuminations Editor, and be sure to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply.

"Dinner with an Angel"

An exclusive preview of
the exciting new fantasy novel

ANGEL FIRE

BY

ANDREW M.
GREELEY

ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD DAVIS

INTRODUCTION: Someone is trying to kill Nobel Prize-winning biologist Sean Desmond, to prevent him from revealing startling new truths about human evolution in his acceptance speech in Stockholm.

But the first attempt on Desmond's life is stopped by the miraculous intervention of an awesome alien being with terrifying powers of destruction. A being who manifests as a strikingly beautiful woman calling herself Gabriella. A woman who tells Desmond she is his guardian angel....

"**T**rying to make up your mind whether I'm real, Professor Desmond?" she asked lightly.

They were eating in the rose and silver Trianon room of the old Villard houses on which the Helmsley Palace Hotel had been grafted. It was Stanford White at his most baroque.

Gabriella was dressed in an attractive black cocktail dress with thin shoulder straps. She was wearing an emerald brooch around her neck, a large and memorable stone, as the breasts below it were large and memorable, black net stockings (pantyhose, he assumed, though you could never be sure about your women angels) and a discretely powerful scent. Fendi's was it? La Passione di Roma? If you made it up yourself, why not the best? Every eye in the lobby had turned to watch her when they exited from the





ANGEL

elevator. Every head in the Trianon room swiveled when she entered. Sean thought that was fine. She was worth looking at. And I get credit for having such a woman in tow.

If they only knew who she was.

"You like my appearance?" She smiled, with just a touch of what in his species would be considered vanity. "The appearance of my analog, to be precise?"

Angels vain? Could that be? Well, if you have physical bodies, it seemed logical that you should be concerned about your physical appearance.

She was just the kind of woman that Sean Desmond admired the most.

Silver hair, smooth girlish face, full voluptuous classical figure, neatly encased in sweater and skirt, smooth skin, flawless facial bones, elegant and slender legs, soft brown eyes with long lashes; age somewhere between thirty-five and forty-five; youth and maturity combined in a perfect blend.

Too perfect, like a manikin.

She was a number of different women—a prim and impatient executive (fingers drumming on the arms of chairs, eyes stern); affectionate mother (soft smile, warm eyes), merry imp (jaw tilted upwards, eyes dancing). Had those who had sent her deliberately designed her body and character to disarm him—the kind of women he worshipped and avoided?

Was she wearing a ring? Dumb question.

But he somehow couldn't quite focus his eyes on her ring finger.

"You'll do," he said.

"I'm glad." She relaxed in her chair, greatly amused. "If you must have a guardian angel to protect you, I would not want to be an eyesore."

"To protect me from whom?"

She frowned, an empress asked a question she did not want to answer. "Not from whom but why. We know who they are but we do not understand why."

"But—"

"Not so loud," she said. "That couple at the table in the corner are from the Other Side ... and please, don't stare at them."

He restrained the muscles in his neck. Strangely enough, Gaby's alabaster shoulders, throat and chest, un-

SPOTLIGHT

FATHER ANDREW GREELEY

This story, about grace in creation, is not a doctrinal treatise on Angels (such as Ladislav Boro's *Angels and Men* or Doctor Billy Graham's *Angels, Angels, Angels*) and should not be interpreted by the norms appropriate for such treatises. It is rather speculative fiction based on two premises: evolution is directed towards mind and, pace St. Bernard and St. Augustine, Angels have spiritual bodies.

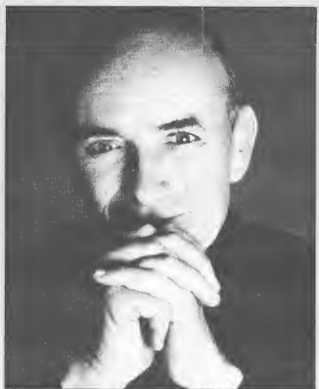
Hence, Gabriella Light is a purely fictional entity and is based entirely on my imagination as guided by these two premises. Any similarity between her and any Angel (or Seraph) living or dead is purely coincidental.

Yet, to paraphrase somewhat a remark of the fictional King Karl Gustav in this story, it would be a shame if somewhere in the *cosmos* there were not someone like her. . . .

—from the Author's Note to
Angel Fire by Andrew M. Greeley
(Warner Books, July 1988)

As his millions of faithful readers can attest, Father Andrew M. Greeley is not only a prodigiously prolific author, but a prime specimen of a living, breathing paradox. A devout (and celibate) Roman Catholic priest, he is also the author of such steamy bestsellers as *The Cardinal Sins*, *Ascent into Heaven*, and *Patience of a Saint*, as well as the acclaimed "Father Blackie Ryan" series of hard-boiled mysteries. A pragmatic working journalist who can be counted on for lively political commentary on the relationship between Church and State, Greeley is also a distinguished scholar with over one hundred published papers; a research associate at the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, and a professor of sociology at the University of Arizona. Fitting so many careers into one lifetime would be more than enough work for most ordinary mortals, but Father Greeley has recently, by some miracle, managed to find the time to begin yet another new and intriguing pursuit.

He's started to write science fiction.



To be sure, it's no ordinary species of science fiction, since it avoids raygun-blasting space opera to focus on more epistemological concerns. In that, Father Greeley has more in common with the philosophical speculations of his Anglican counterpart C. S. Lewis than with the cold equations of high-tech sf. However, this does not mean that his more fanciful novels are lacking in fun. Consider *Angel Fire*: With its skillful blend of fast-paced thrills, spicy science-fictional satire, and cosmic insight, it reads like a three-way collaboration between Robert Ludlum, Robert Heinlein and Teilhard de Chardin.

Reading *Angel Fire*, the paradox of Andrew Greeley resolves itself. His life's work is to enlighten his readers, in both the rational and spiritual senses of the word.

—TK

deniably attractive, had about as much impact on him as would a statue in the Vatican Museum.

Nonetheless he filed the images away for future reference.

Out of the corner of his eye he caught a quick glimpse of a man and woman in their middle thirties at the corner table. They looked like prosperous tourists from Topka.

"Not the KGB type," he muttered.

"Who said KGB?"

"Nor CIA."

"Who said CIA?"

"So you won't answer that question? Okay. Did you folks really sing at Bethlehem?" he asked, half in fun and half in earnest.

Gaby shrugged her shapely shoulders. "It was a night or which there was reason to sing, was it not? Do not misunderstand. Despite your religious superstitions about us, we do not act as messengers for Anyone, at least not regularly. Although there are times when there are special missions which we feel that we must take on, we are as ultimately uncertain about the existence of Anyone as you are. Yet we do have certain insights which on occasion we feel we must share with those who live on this planet. Sometimes we sing."

"Will you sing for me?"

"Perhaps." She sipped the seventy-five dollar Côte de Rhone red he had ordered. He bet it meant nothing to her.

Do Angels drink wine?

"Is it necessary to stare at me?" Her large brown eyes regarded him severely. Incredible long lashes.

"I'm a scientist." He found his quick Irish tongue. "I can't help but wonder if it's really you sitting across the table from me."

"What else would it be?" she said briskly, like a senior professor dealing with a dull first-year graduate student. "I appear to you in the form of an analog, that is, what I would look like if I were in your species and at your stage of the evolutionary process. The energy patterns which constitute my body are not perceptible to your sensing mechanisms," she shrugged those damn ivory shoulders again, "so I alter my energy patterns that you may perceive me."

"We can't do that."

She smiled, a patient mother with a spoiled little boy. "When your species evolves into its next phase, we presume that you will develop that power. It is not particularly remarkable. Watching your evolutionary process is one of our interests in this planet. It will facilitate our understanding of our own past."

He felt like a chimp in a laboratory. Or a wolfhound panting worship-

fully next to his mistress.

"Where's your planet and what's it like?"

"Those are irrelevant questions." She drew her lips together primly. "And 'planet' is not exactly the appropriate word for the region of our ancestors."

"Why don't you appear like one of your damn ancestors?" he said irritably.

She threw back her head and laughed, the first time she'd done that. She was so heart-stoppingly gorgeous when she laughed that Sean had to hang on to the table.

"Our predecessors were not ugly creatures with six feet and whirling antennae and yucky scales, as your daugh-



ters would say. Nor were they cuddly little adorables like E.T. You would doubtless recognize them as fellow rational beings and graceful ones at that. But this over-decorated dining room would empty in a fraction of one of your seconds should I produce an analog of your phase of our evolutionary process.... Incidentally, your friends at the corner table are asking for their check."

"What rank are you?"

"Rank?" She chuckled.

"Yeah, like maybe a Throne?"

"Oh, the nine-choir myth?"

"Not true?"

She waved an elegant hand. "Not relevant."

"You seemed a little offended when I suggested that you were a Throne." He tried to drive home what little advantage he had. "I bet you're someone higher. Like a Seraph, one of those alleged to stand before the face of God."

"Do you think, Jackie Jim, that you're that important?"

Nice putdown.

"Is your name really Gabriella?"

"It's one of my names," she answered. "Actually, I rather like it."

"Any relation to the fella in the New Testament? Gabriel, I mean?"

She was not amused. "I would remind you, Professor Desmond," she said grimly, "that Saint Luke was a male. Characteristic of the patriarchy of his time and very unlike the man about whom he wrote, he was a chauvinist. The Hebrew word *gabor* means 'strength.'" She had adapted the dry pedantic tones of the roundtable, a schoolmarm with a slow pupil. "So you could interpret the name as Strong One of God..."

"I can respect that," Seamus shivered slightly.

"... you might think of it as the name for phenomena that your species has come to associate with my presence..."

"Uh... does that mean you play the trumpet?"

"Superstitious folklore," she said.

"That doesn't answer my question."

"I don't have to answer your questions. I must tell you the truth because we angels tell the truth, which is more than your species does. But you have no right to my knowledge."

"You won't tell me when the Last Judgment will be?"

"Did not your Teacher say that even He did not know? If He didn't know, how would I know?"

There seemed to be a nimbus of red dots swirling around her head. Or were they only in his imagination?

"You don't play the trumpet, then?"

She hesitated. "I have some skill on a musical instrument which might be thought of as an analog to your trumpet. However, I am not assigned to sound it for your mythological Day of Wrath."

In the background he thought he heard, faint but lovely, the sweet piercing notes of a trumpet playing a concerto that he knew did not exist.

"Which does not mean that you couldn't be assigned to blow the trumpet?"

She shrugged her lovely shoulders indifferently. "We try to accommodate the Other's requests. They are infrequent, you know."

"Could you wake up the dead with that trumpet-like thing of yours?"

She tilted his chin back and absorbed him in the mystery of her deep gray eyes. The trumpet music seemed to grow louder, a waterfall of sound pouring into a rushing river.

"Jackie Jim," she smiled affectionately, "I could wake up all the dead in the cosmos with my horn."

As the trumpet notes soared towards a crescendo, Desmond found himself sinking into the soothing marshland of her eyes. "Quite an alarm clock," he

ANGEL

murmured.

"HOW MANY ANGELS CAN DANCE ON THE head of a pin?" he found himself asking.

"A very stupid question," She filled his wineglass. "Typical of your species. What do you think the answer is?"

"At Notre Dame they told us in response to that question that angels don't dance."

"Calumny," she snapped. "You can do better than that."

"Well," he pondered the question. "You are energy patterns with some biological base. So I'd guess," he grinned wickedly, "that all of you could probably focus some of your energies on the head of a pin. But that it wouldn't be much fun."

She nodded approvingly. "You are clever. No wonder you won the Nobel Prize."

"You really dance?"

"Really."

"Will you dance for me?"

"Certainly not."

"Why not?"

"It would be ... inappropriate."

Her chin shot up.

"Please—I mean, I never saw an angel dance."

"Ishtar Variations as background, I suppose."

How did she know he was thinking of D'indy's music?

"If you wanted to."

"Certainly not." She dismissed him and his ideas with a wave of her hand.

"Any dance you want, then."

The executive was replaced by the imp. "I'll think about it."

He pursued his catechism. "Are you really a woman?"

She was watching the couple from Topeka intently. And her answer was preoccupied. "Am I the source of life ... no, you mean do we have sexual reproduction, don't you? You don't follow your own hunches rigorously enough, Professor Desmond. You say in your Nobel Prize talk that once there are biopolymers, the emergence of life, organic structures, and memory and intellect, that first unconscious, then conscious are inevitable. Do you not find sexual reproduction also inevitable?"

Out of the corner of his eye again, Sean saw the man from Topeka give the maitre d' an American Express card, gold of course.

"Angels screw?" he murmured.

Her brown eyes flicked back to him,

like impatient bumble bees. "Your species' ability to use distasteful language for important functions is not attractive. But the answer is yes, we do join our energy fields as part of the reproductive process—and we enjoy it far more than you. And we do it for weeks and weeks of your time too. Feel inferior now, Professor Desmond?"

"You're a mother and a wife?" he asked, trying to cover his confusion.

"I am here to protect you because, despite your obnoxiousness, you are especially important to us." She snapped at him, "I have not come to discuss my personal life."

"Sorry," he mumbled.

She tilted his chin back and absorbed him in the mystery of her deep gray eyes. "I could wake up all the dead in the cosmos with my horn," she said.

"No, I'm sorry." She smiled apologetically. "I am unduly sensitive ... do go on with your questions about our, ah, complementing processes, to use a word that approximates our own."

"So you feel, analogously, lust?"

"You'd better believe it." She actually winked. "We are rigorously pair-bonded," she winked again at the buzz word, "like the Gambel quail. Apparently that, too, is evolutionary development. In a million years or so, your species may be pair-bonded too, though as I've insisted repeatedly, the processes are at best analogous, so we cannot actually predict what your species will be like after the next, ah, punctuation is I believe your word?"

"I'm sure," he wound up for a fast pitch, "that you are rated as one of the most attractive woman Seraphs around."

She blushed deeply. "Woman Seraph is an irrelevant title. But, yes, some of my associates make that judgment."

"I thought they might."

Impulsively she touched his cheek with two fingers of her right hand. "You're sweet, Seano." Her eyes glowed. "A nuisance sometimes, but still a good and kind man. I'm glad I was assigned

to be your guardian."

For a brief and delirious instant, Sean Seamus Desmond felt that he was filled with all the peace and goodness and beauty of the universe. Sexual pleasure? No, something that transcended sex like sex transcended chocolate ice cream.

"I am too," he managed to say eternities later when he returned to Earth and the Trianon Room of the Helmsley Palace Hotel.

"Any more questions?"

"I suppose you have two girl kids?"

"Now you're reading my mind ..."

"Only your face when you talked about my own brats. You've been there before."

"I have born two bearers of life."

She nodded solemnly. "Yes, they are perhaps a bit older in our framework than your delightful daughters."

"And that ring I see on your left hand sometimes. And sometimes not, like you're not sure whether it ought to appear?"

"You are an observant little man, aren't you?" She considered him with steady eye and pursed lips.

"Clever little chimp."

"Clever enough to win a Nobel."

She smiled her sweetest of smiles, and the thunder clouds on her brow disappeared. "Yes, I have ... I have a ... spouse, to use your word. He is no longer ... we are mortal too, like all energy patterns. We live much longer than you do, relatively speaking. Yet it does not seem long enough ..."

Her voice trailed off. Her ring finger was now definitely free of a ring.

"And you do not go gentle into that good night either?"

"We are no more certain than you that there is Anyone waiting in that good night. There are excellent reasons ... when we play our messenger role we seem to be working for someone and yet ... we cannot be sure."

"Angels are vulnerable, then?" To his astonishment he had touched her fingers as they rested on the stem of her wine glass.

"Surely," she sighed. "The more one is mind and love, the more that—they are coming over here ..."

Gaby stiffened, but the tourists from Topeka seemed eminently friendly.

"Doctor Desmond, isn't it?" said the man, overweight, balding, and genial. "We don't often see red-haired, freckle-faced leprechauns on the cover of *Time*. Congratulations on your prize; we're all proud of you."

Their name, appropriately, was Jones and they were from Toledo, not from Topeka.

"My assistant ..." he began to in-

roduce Gaby and realized he didn't know what name she was using.

"Doctor Gabriella Light." She smiled easily.

"We hope you have a wonderful time in Stockholm," said Mrs. Jones, a dumpy, pleasant woman.

"They seem like nice, ordinary people," Sean said after they left.

"Don't they?" She watched them intently as they walked out of the dining room. "Nevertheless, they are on the Other Side. Yet I do not understand ..."

"Maybe they're more interested in you than in me."

Her head turned quickly. "A possibility, surely. Though it would not make much sense ... still ..."

He wanted to finish tonight's lesson on the anthropology (probably the wrong word) of angels.

"Do ... uh, I mean, widows ... remarry in your culture?"

"I suppose you are going to insist that I find myself another complement and settle down?" she said hotly. "I will not accept such importune suggestions from my own species and certainly not from another."

"I'm importuned the same way," he said, trying to sound wry and whimsical.

She drew a deep breath. "I am sorry, Sean, you have touched a sensi-

tive ...". She smiled winningly. "You do have a record of making members of the opposite sex angry, don't you?"

"Only in two evolutionary processes, though," he replied, feeling now like an adorable golden retriever who had made a mess on the parlor floor.

"And I don't consider you to be either a chimp or an Irish setter," she insisted, touching his hand. "Rather you are a fellow pilgrim, a companion on the journey. Like Tobias with Raphael."

He decided that he would do his part to ease the tension. "Well, I guess I may have paid too much attention to Sister Intemperata when she said that the only sin the angels could commit was pride ..."

She relaxed, accepting his offer of truce. "We are victims of all seven of your cardinal sins and a few others besides."

"So you don't do only the sin of Lucifer, refusing to serve even God?"

Gaby exploded from her chair, like a rocket racing for orbit.

"You shanty Irish bastard I don't care whether they kill you or not."

"What did I say wrong?"

"Nothing, really, except your species's mixture of Christianity and Iranian mythology has always infuriated me

by its inaccuracy and its arrogance. There is no need for devils to persuade you to do evil. You are quite capable of it on your own. And, Professor Desmond, as far as we can ascertain, there are no demons in this cosmos. There are certainly some evil forces and energies and they are not without power, Most High knows, but they are not personalized like your Satan." And her voice rose again, "And if you would read the Book of Job—which you haven't, like most of the rest of the Bible—and if you ignored that vile ..." she searched for a word ... "that vile Puritan John Milton, you would know that even Satan at that time was considered to be one of Yahweh's court and not a rival prince of darkness."

"No Satan?" he said, kind of disappointed.

"Didn't Monsignor Ryan tell you that Satan was Yahweh's jester? Not a bad angel. And Lucifer was not a demon, he was a good spirit, he never defied the Most High, he was brilliant and kind," she clutched both fists tightly, "and deeply devout ..."

Gabriella Light ... Oh, My God ...

"And your uh ... complement?"

She bowed her head and nodded.

Angels, he told himself resolutely, are not supposed to cry. ■





TZ INTERVIEW

WADE DAVIS

EXPLORER OF UNSEEN WORLDS

The controversial author of *The Serpent and the Rainbow* talks about voodoo and zombies, magic and religion, and the frontiers of science and spirituality.

He's been called a "real-life Indiana Jones." In some ways, the description fits. Like his fictional counterpart, Wade Davis has traveled boldly into unexplored territory in search of mystery and magic.

But Davis is also a serious scholar, an ethnobotanist from Harvard who has researched the relationship between plants and the cultures that use them for over a decade. He first made the headlines a couple of years ago with the publication of *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, an engrossing account of his discovery of a scientific basis for the legendary tales of zombies in Haiti. The book was acclaimed critically not only for its scientific rigor, but for its engaging novelistic style and its insights into the rich spiritual system known as voodoo.

Davis attracted even more attention with the release of a film of the same name, directed by horror maven Wes Craven, creator of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. While Craven's film is broadly fictionalized, long on entertainment and short on scientific accuracy, Davis says he's proud to be associated with the movie, and feels it's true to the spirit of his book.

After spending nearly a year trying to track Davis down (he was on an expedition to the Amazon jungle), we were finally able to catch up with him in Boston, while he was on a promotional tour for the film. (Davis admits that one of the reasons he agreed to publicize the film was to help finance his next expedition.) We found him a very confident, assured individual, who has as much the soul of a poet as the reckless heart of an Indiana Jones-style adventurer. When he's not canoeing down the Amazon, or relaxing by taking one hundred-sixty-mile hikes across glacial areas, he makes his home in Vancouver, British Columbia. And, while he admits he doesn't want to be known for the rest of his life as a "world-famous zombiologist," he also promises that more accounts of his incredible adventures will soon be forthcoming.

WIATER: If we may, we'd just like to say that you appear remarkably fit for a person who's undergone terrifying hallucinations, been buried alive, made love to a beautiful Haitian wom-



Bill Pullman and Tony Award-winner Zakes Mokae co-star in the film version of Davis's book.

an, and had your scrotum nailed to a chair by the Haitian secret police. At least that's what happened to you in the film version of *The Serpent and the Rainbow*...

DAVIS: Well, I won't say how much of that is true! [Laughs.] But I never did have my balls nailed to a chair...! You have to consider how these things work: the book and the film are really two different entities. You may write a book but the movie is somebody else's. I didn't write the script for *The Serpent and the Rainbow*; it's Wes Craven's work. I'm just glad that Wes has done such a good job. I was also fortunate to become very good friends with the producer, David Ladd.

WIATER: Considering that the film is being advertised as "from the director of *A Nightmare On Elm Street*," weren't you concerned that Hollywood was going to make another hokey zombie movie?

DAVIS: I think at first everyone assumed it would turn out that way, no matter how good the intentions of the director, producer, and the actors were. They all said, "Anything about

WADE DAVIS

voodoo and zombies must be a horror picture." But at the same time, no one involved in the production wanted a horror picture—they wanted an action-adventure story that remained true to the spirit of the book. I couldn't have associated myself with the picture on the basis of the early scripts, which were eventually thrown out.

Even though I had no official association with the film, the producers invited me out of courtesy and affection to come down to the set. So I went down to the set for a month in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. And I was able to do some good during the very embryonic stages of the production, just by being there as a resource—talking about the book, talking about the way it really was. I think it helped the participants, who were also away from Hollywood, away from those unique commercial pressures. Instead they were witnessing this incredible country, listening to me, with all of them having read and really enjoyed the book. I'm not trying to claim credit for anything, except that I was part of a process to push in a direction where we got a really good film today. It's a film which can be taken as a great adventure yarn, a psychological study, a love story—there's all kinds of layers. The remarkable thing is, it's truer to the spirit of my book and truer to what goes on in Haiti than people could ever imagine.

I put all of my energies for four years of my life into understanding this religion and this society. I've written two books on the subject. I have another one coming out called *Passage of Darkness*, from the University of North Carolina Press. [This is Davis's doctoral thesis on the subject of voodoo.—ED.] It's really my last word on the subject. I've been involved with this since 1982, so if anybody should feel possessive about this book, I guess I should! But I don't—the movie is a different entity, but a wonderful one.

WIATER: One of the controversies surrounding both the book and film is the fact that the voodoo process apparently involves grave-robbing and the use of human bones in making the "zombie potion."

DAVIS: On what level are we really entitled to judge this? When I described going into the graveyard, it's not because I wanted to expose the sensational, it was just to illustrate that line: "Haiti will teach you Good and Evil are one. We never confuse them, nor do we keep them apart." This religion—this whole way of life, between the spirit realm and the material realm, works for them. I think all peoples have the desire to understand the spirit realm—whatever that means—but our society, on one level, has become so rigidly secular that those aspirations sometimes have their outlets in perverse and strange ways. You can get a Charles Manson, you can get a Jonestown, or the tyranny of the medieval church. Not just the medieval church—even more recently than that.

The voodooists, I think, have a very healthy religion. Be-

cause all of those passions are *lived out*. Day to day. The voodooist says, "The white person goes to church and speaks about God. We dance in the temple and *become* God."

WIATER: During your travels in Central and South America have you ever crossed over into what we in the West would consider the "unknown"?

DAVIS: Well, I've eaten a lot of weird things! [Laughs.] But one way to answer that question is that I haven't seen any "supernatural" phenomena, as the West understands them. For example, our misconception of the way native Americans use psychoactive drugs is classic. In our society, we define drugs not on the basis of their pharmacology, but rather on their legality within our so-called moral judgment. We choose to use drugs like tobacco, which is the most addictive drug on the planet, bar none, including the opiates; a plant which has killed more people than any other. Marijuana—whether you like it or not like it—has never been implicated in a single death. Yet tobacco has been scientifically proven to kill thousands every year. It makes our teenagers addicts for life. But we still subsidize it—we tax it, we profit by it. My God, talk about people in glass houses!

Yet we presume to judge an Indian in the Amazon who takes a "vision vine" and experiences his gods! Who are we to say, "Oh, those drug users!" The comparison is absolutely unbelievable to me. The cocoa leaves the Indians chew are full of calcium and nutrients and contain perhaps one half to one percent dry weight cocaine. But because we've got a national drug problem in which it seems that half of our generation wants to blow its brains out with cocaine, we in turn export our social problem. And before you know it, narcs are burning the fields down there where the Indians have used this leaf in beautiful ways for thousands of years!

They divine the future with it, they measure distance in terms of cocoa chews. They don't even shake hands as a greeting—they exchange leaves. It's just that we—Western culture—define things to our advantage. If we use human bones in religious practices, it's okay, because we disguise our use with euphemisms. We call them "relics." In Rome there are rooms full of human bones, and no one comments on it. We say voodooists shouldn't drink chicken blood in their rituals, but we commit what anthropologists call "endocannibalistic" rituals every Sunday in the Roman Catholic church—in the rite of Communion. We say the Indians should be punished for using their drugs, yet we sell the most deadly drug known in the plant kingdom. And we don't call it a drug, it's just "a smoke." The hypocrisy is thicker than sweat on a bull!

WIATER: It seems that if we don't understand another culture's spiritual beliefs, we consider them dark, mysterious, primitive—and probably inherently evil.

DAVIS: That's true. If you go into a bookstore, like Shambhala here in Cambridge, where there's all this "New Age" literature everywhere and incense in the air, and nobody talks in anything but soft vowels—and say, "Where is the African religion section?" they'll look at you and say, "What?" And then they'll

"The voodooists, I think, have a very healthy religion. Because all of those passions are *lived out*. Day to day. The voodooist says, 'The white person goes to church and speaks about God. We dance in the temple and *become* God.'"

often say, "Look over in the *primitive* religions section," and as the word "primitive" comes out they'll catch themselves. But that's what they really mean. They'll have books from every goddamn esoteric tradition of Tibet, where two monks in a monastery in Luda once had a vision and have since written four books about it! But if you ask for a book on *African* religion, they give you a blank stare. If you ask for a book on voodoo, they'll say "Go buy *The Twilight Zone*—we don't deal with magic!" It's nothing more or less than racism.

WIATER: What sparked your interest in other cultures and other places? Did you read a lot of adventure novels and travel books or go to all of the *Tarzan* movies as a youngster?

DAVIS: Well, I've always been curious and enthusiastic about everything. But no, I didn't read about it or watch the movies as a kid—I *did* it. My late father—whom I loved and respected very deeply—sent me to British Columbia alone when I was fourteen. When I was fifteen, I was fighting forest fires and cutting trails in the Rocky Mountains. I paid for my Harvard education by working logging camps. And Harvard was just another adventure along the way. I'll never forget how at one point I wanted to drop out of Harvard—just get away from everything for a while. I walked in to Professor Schultes's [regarded as the world's foremost authority on hallucinogenic plants] office, told him who I was, and said, "I want to go to South America and collect plants." And Schultes looked at me and said, "When do you want to go?" I just couldn't believe it! [Laughs.] Two weeks later, I was in the Amazon.

WIATER: For many of us, our idea of how South American Indians use psychedelic plants comes from such places as *National Geographic* specials or films like *The Emerald Forest*. How accurately do they capture the sense of what drugs mean in a religious or spiritual sense to these cultures?

DAVIS: The point to be made here is that one ubiquitous human appetite is to escape the everyday reality of normal perception. The means to do that are many. It can be prayer, it can be meditation, it can be enduring extremes of heat and cold, it can be sweat lodges. It can be any number of activities. Some cultures achieve it through the use of drugs. The use of psychoactive drugs is nothing more than one means of altering consciousness.

Calling it a desire to escape everyday reality is not a value judgment, it's simply an observation. The use of drugs to that end is, in fact, a very common occurrence throughout the world. The important thing to note is that those consciousness-expanding drugs are used in a societally approved way, and in a ritualistic setting, in which there's a cloak of ritualistic belief and practice that insulates the individual from the power of the actual chemical.

The first thing one has to understand about psychedelic drugs is that there's no such thing as a "good" drug or a "bad" drug. There are good and bad ways of using drugs. Similarly, every drug has an ambivalent potential for good or bad effects. It really provides a template for the way psychological and cultural forces can go to work.

WIATER: For example?

DAVIS: The classic example is the mushrooms of Oregon. When people who go out looking for those psychoactive mushrooms and ingest them, they generally experience a mild intoxication, which is not particularly disturbing, and in many cases people find it quite exhilarating. Yet when families go out looking for edible mushrooms, and inadvertently eat psychoactive ones, they invariably end up in the poison clinic at the hospital. That doesn't mean that the mushroom changed at all—it was the *expectations* brought to the experience that changed. That's an important fundamental axiom that must be brought to our view of these plants.

I think it's *very* difficult to know what an Amazon

CONTINUED ON PAGE 86



Pullman portrays Dennis Alan, an anthropologist drawn into the dark underworld of Haitian magic.



Director Wes Craven's film is a fictionalized adventure rather than a documentary account.



Davis: "The film is truer to the spirit of my book than people could ever imagine."





SLIDING

A single car on a moonlit mountain highway. A woman alone on a strange and terrifying odyssey. And the journey she is making leads down roads few ever follow, to a place beyond memory and time. . . .

BARBARA OWENS

ILLUSTRATION BY L. MORGAN-FITZPATRICK

I'M DRIVING. ALONG A NARROW BAND OF highway in this moonlight. Mountains lean over me on my right; on the left they plunge, suicidal, into the ocean far below. The dark is so quiet I can hear waves booming against rocks down there. I think I used to love the ocean, its wildness and mystery, but I don't look down. The cliffs slide too steeply, and I've had enough sliding for a while. I fix my eyes on the road rushing up between my headlights and concentrate on the radio. It's playing something by a group I don't recognize, but I listen fiercely as though they're personal friends.

The road's mine—I haven't seen another traveler in miles. I'm driving a little car. A Toyota, I see, and judging from its interior I guess it to be red. It cuts neatly through the darkness, clinging to the road. I like that. For a moment I feel secure, correctly placed. I belong in this little car, going where I'm going. Then I remember I don't know where I'm going and the fear is back. Even as I try to stop myself, I'm wondering where I was an hour ago and who I was then.

This road is lonely, the night too black. I need somewhere to be, to orient myself. Will it ever end? I've stopped trying to convince myself it

isn't happening. It is, and all I can do is slide and slide and hope someday I'll stop.

There—a small miracle. Miles with no light in the darkness, and now a diner sits tucked under tall pines at the side of the road. It's open at this late hour—one car and a pickup sit in the gravel lot.

Before I go inside I take a survey in the rearview mirror. I know the face. It's mine, but the hair is light and lank, hanging straight to the shoulder. I'm sure I had dark hair before.

Taking a deep breath, I leave the false security of my little car. It is red, sick purple now in the neon glow. It carries California plates; the parked car and pickup do, too. I'm in California. I wonder if I've ever been here before.

The diner's quiet and ordinary—a counter and several worn booths. Two men sit side by side at the counter. The waitress, small and round with graying hair, greets me with no sign of recognition. Then I haven't been here before.

After my coffee's served the three resume their conversation, a sharing of favorite television shows. I open the strange brown purse I've carried inside and sort through its contents, eyeing the California driver's license with a

SLIDING

feeling of dread. My picture looks back at me, but the name and address imprinted there have no meaning. I hunt for a pen in the purse and try copying that signature on a napkin. Once written, it's no facsimile—it's the same. As I wad the napkin into a tight ball, the pen falls to the floor. I don't care—I close the purse carefully. Nothing in there feels like it belongs to me.

The waitress has reappeared before me. "Anything else?" she inquires with a friendly smile.

I shouldn't have dropped the pen. I search for it awkwardly. "I think I could use a little help," I say, trying to match her smile.

Her attention slips away. "Oh, honey, couldn't we all?"

She's gone, back to join the men. Her tag says her name is Rose. That must be comforting to know. Would someone please pin a tag on me?

One of the men addresses me. "What

do you think? You like that TV show?"

I haven't understood anything they're discussing. I swallow the tension in my throat. "I don't watch much television," I say, and they turn away, closing their warm huddle to me. I'm sure they don't notice when I leave.

Outside in the gravel I stand uncertainly beside my little red car. The night's so black—emptiness stretches from me in all directions. I'm cold; I wish I had a sweater. The Toyota's motor starts eagerly. The radio plays softly and my gas tank registers half. It doesn't matter which way I go. I steer the car through gravel and up onto the road.

AND I'M DRIVING. THE SUN'S SO BRIGHT it hurts my eyes; startled tears spring to them from the shock. My hands convulse on the wheel and the station wagon veers, but the street's wide and sleepy and I straighten out with no harm done.

My stomach jumps. My entire body feels empty, weightless, as though everything's sliding away from me at dizzying speed. What is it—wait—wasn't I just—

But I can't hold on. The feeling passes, and I don't remember. My eyes clear to see the street of what appears to be a quiet little town. I keep swallowing to hold something terrible down.

I don't know where I am. That terrible realization rests in me with painful familiarity, as though it's lived there before. The station wagon moves steadily forward, and I don't recognize anything I see.

It has happened before, I'm sure of it but I don't remember anything before a moment ago. I think of sliding and empty black space; I have to pull over to the curb in this unknown little town and get myself in hand.

On my first attempt, in front of a large old yellow house, an elderly lady waves to me from the front yard as though she knows me. The wagon's tires squeal as I pull away. I'm terrified. I should find a doctor. I need help.

The word "doctor" resounds in my head, over and over like the clang of a dying bell, receding until it's so faint I strain to hear, and then it's gone, sucked into black space. It's a balmy day but suddenly I feel cold.

A little park drifts by on my left—sturdy wooden benches and spring flowers make a pleasant scene. Another half block and a low rambling school appears—the sign says JOHNSON ELEMENTARY. I look for a watch, but I'm wearing none. The sun, however, is lowering; the students will have gone. I'll park and sit for a while. I have an

urgent desire to be for a time in one quiet place.

The schoolyard's empty. I sit inside a station wagon I've never seen before and look at grass, trees, climbing objects for young adventurous bodies, white outlines drawn on the ground for children's games. I must have done those things when I was a child. Sun slants off a metal slide, and I look away quickly. I don't like slides.

It's too warm inside the wagon. I reach to lift long hair off my neck and find short curls instead, tight and springy, as from a recent perm. I don't move toward the rearview mirror. I fold my hands in my lap and look straight ahead through the glass. No. I don't want to know.

A sudden voice startles me. "Mrs. Evans?"

I don't turn, but a rap on my window causes me to jump, and the voice repeats, "Mrs. Evans!" I steal a sidelong glance. A young woman is looking in at me. She says the name again. My eyes fall to my left hand, fixing on the wedding band there. That's impossible. Surely I'd remember that.

When she gestures for me to roll down the window, I do. Her eyes aren't friendly. She leans close. "You were supposed to pick your kids up from rehearsal over an hour ago! Miss Butler's with them in the auditorium—we couldn't let them go off alone. Did something happen? Are you all right?"

She waits. I have to do something. After a long moment, I open the door and ease outside. She doesn't move away to give me space; I feel defensive, pinned against the wagon's side.

She's expectant, mouth drawn tight and thin. "I'm sorry," I manage finally. "I guess I forgot."

She mutters something. I turn away from her, purposeful, walking with sure strides to show I'm in a hurry and I'm late, but I'm responsible and know what I'm doing—I'm in control of things. As I pass the wagon's grille, I look at the license plates. Colorado. I continue, direct and steady. I don't remember ever being in Colorado.

After a few feet I slow and glance back, but she hasn't moved. She's watching, so I walk toward the double doors stenciled AUDITORIUM, and fear pounds at me. They're exterior doors and I'm still in her sight. She will watch me all the way through them—I can't run away. Something awful is going to happen.

I pull the doors open, flattening myself against them on the inside. At the far end of the room several small children sit on the floor listening to a woman read. At first no one notices

UPDATE:

BARBARA OWENS



Since her last appearance here in TZ ("Portrait: Edward Larabee," August '86), Barbara Owens has been quietly adding to her credentials as a master of classic eerie suspense stories. Her tales have also appeared in *F&SF*, *Night Cry*, *Asimov's SF*, and *Ellery Queen*. She's won an Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America, and her short story "The New Man" (TZ, March '82) was adapted as the premiere episode of *Tales from the Darkside*.

"I've been strongly influenced by the original *Twilight Zone* series, and by the writings of Shirley Jackson," writes Owens. "I'm presently employed as an executive secretary in the high-tech world of California's Silicon Valley—which is as close as you can get in this world to the *Twilight Zone*."

PHOTO BY DOUGLAS WEIMAN

me, but then every eye turns and I'm impaled against the door by eyes. Six—no, seven children of different ages and sexes look at me. Dear God, they can't all be mine. Somebody whimpers in my throat. I never saw any of them before—I can't speak to one of them by name.

I turn, fumbling at the doors. The woman says something to me and I claw, pound at the starchy doors. No, don't let it happen. Just let me out. A woman *must* know her own children. Let me out.

The doors resist stubbornly. I throw my full weight against them. Let me out!!

They give way suddenly and I'm through—falling, sprawling on my hands and knees, but I'm out, safe from the horror of all those eyes.

FOR A MOMENT I STAY THERE, UNASHAMED at the spectacle of myself on hands and knees, waiting for my heart to slow. Then I lift my head and find people watching me. Four people—two rather elegant dowager types, a brittle blonde woman with a tight frown, a young man with dark unruly hair.

"Good Lord," one of the dowagers says, "are you all right?"

I rise awkwardly as the blonde woman says with an icing of frost in her voice. "Where's the box? Don't tell me you broke it, Dee."

She seems to be addressing me. I stand in one of those expensive little gift boutiques—light, glancing off crystal and colored glass, sinks like needles into my eyes. I don't know these people. For reasons I don't understand, "doctor doctor doctor" is a dying echo inside my head.

"Did you break it?" the woman repeats, and the young man steps to me and gently removes a small stained-glass box from one of my nerveless hands.

"Voilà!" He holds it high. The dowagers sigh and look relieved. "Let me finish this transaction for you, ladies. Dee looks a little shaken up." He turns to me with real concern in his eyes. "Are you okay? You came through that door like a tornado."

My mouth is dry. I strain to make the words come out. "I'm fine. Thank you. I'm fine."

The blonde woman speaks sharply. "Dee can finish it, Mark. I need you over here."

Reluctantly, he replaces the box in my hand and follows her across the shop. The dowagers and I regard each other warily. I have no idea what I'm supposed to do.

"I want that gift-wrapped and delivered," one lady finally says. From her

tone I gather it's a reminder—she's told me this before.

"Of course." Just to my right is a small counter, decorative and discreet. There are papers lying there—it seems a promising place to start. I move behind it and the dowagers follow to take a position at its front. They seem satisfied, so I must be in the proper place.

I lower the little box to the counter and reach for something, anything to give the appearance I'm following an established procedure; my hand falls on a pad of combination sales/delivery slips. I study it with resigned dread. A name and address are imprinted across its top in ornate little letters: CARRUTHERS is



the shop, and the address is New York. I absorb it slowly. I have no personal mind images of New York. But I'm here.

With an effort I begin to write out a slip. The ladies provide the delivery address and message for the gift card but when I ask for their names and address, the response is surprised. "Surely you have that in your file."

"Oh, I'm new here," I say, trying to make it sound like a joke. After a short silence, one of them says a trifle coldly, "Oh, really, Dee!" And the information I need does not come.

From the corner of my eye I see the blonde woman and young man watching. I whisper miserably, "I'm sorry, I don't remember. You see, something terrible's happening to me."

My gaze falls on the stained glass box. Its colors are warm, subdued. They mesmerize me; shadow memories stir somewhere inside my head.

"Rowena," I hear one of the ladies say. "I think we need you here."

The blonde woman materializes at my elbow. "Step aside, Dee. I'll finish this."

I can't—I'm unable to stop staring at the little box.

"Should you call a doctor?" a dowager says in a low voice. "She must have hit her head when she fell."

"No doctor," I hear my voice say. "My head is fine."

The young man, Mark, steps forward. "Let me take her home, Rowena. It's close. She obviously doesn't feel well."

I rouse. "No!" How can I explain I don't know where I live?

But Rowena has murmured approval and Mark is leading me, hand firm on my elbow. I hang back; I don't want to leave the stained-glass box.

Once we are in his car, my head begins to clear. He says little, glancing at me occasionally. I can't read his eyes.

"Do you know where I live?" He hasn't asked, but he seems to be following a definite route.

He looks puzzled. "Of course." It occurs to me that I don't know how well I know this man. As if in answer, he lays his hand on my knee; that answers some of my uncertainty. "Look, you sure you're okay?"

With great effort, I manage to sound light. "I am, really. I feel better being out in the air." He squeezes my knee and removes his hand. Maybe he can help me. Trying to sound casual, I say, "I—I seem to have a problem with sliding."

"With what?"

"Have you ever felt kind of loose—moving? Like you slide in and out of where you are, and you can't hold on long enough to—" I stop, mouth dry. It sounds crazy. "It's kind of hard to explain. I don't suppose you ever felt that way."

He looks ahead for awhile, then says quietly, "No." Something closes inside me. We obviously aren't as close as I'd hoped.

I force a smile. "Never mind, I'm just being silly."

We ride the rest of the way in silence. When he pulls into the lot of a small apartment complex, searching for a place to park, I say, "Let me out here. I'll be okay. You'd better get back."

He goes without argument. I search the insides of the pouchy straw bag I'm carrying and find an apartment key—2D. Suddenly I'm so tired I'm afraid I'm going to fall. I want to sleep. I need to feel safe and peaceful—I don't want to carry this fear anymore.

In the foyer, a woman passes me on her way out.

"Good morning, Miss Rogers. You're home early."

"Yes," I smile. "I think I'm catching the flu."

I stand inside the closed door of

SLIDING

2D and look at a small efficiency apartment—furnished, clean and nondescript. I see a stereo, records, posters on the walls, but I search for the bedroom and sink onto the unmade bed that isn't mine.

I stretch on my back, staring at the ceiling. I think of stained glass. Warm colors, soothing, and although I'm sure I can never sleep again, I do.

I'M DREAMING I'M TO MEET SOMEONE important. I wait for their call and I'm excited, but when the phone rings and I rush for it I can't seem to reach it. I run and run but I get no closer, and I start to cry because I'm afraid I'll miss this very important call. Then I stumble, and the phone moves away from me. I'll never catch it now. Even after it's lost in the distance I lie there, lost, hearing it ringing, ringing somewhere.

I jump awake, ringing indeed close at my side. The room is full of faint morning light and the phone at my bedside continues to ring until I lunge to stop it, pressing the receiver tight against my ear.

"What?" I whisper. My throat is dry and full of wool.

"Peg?" a woman's merry voice shouts.

I'm not sure if I'm awake or asleep. "No."

"Come on, I know that voice. You said to wake you. Well, I have. Come on, let's go!"

Energy surges through the phone. It makes me realize how tired I am. I don't understand—did she call me Peg? "Go where?"

She laughs. My head's clearing. I sit up. Like it or not, I'm awake.

"Peggy, it's Saturday! Biking in the park, remember? Twenty minutes—I'll be there. Be ready."

For a few minutes after she hangs up my eyes assess the room I'm in. Upstairs—tree leaves crowd against the window. House, not apartment—a porch roof outside, a neighbor's wall showing through the leaves. The sun's rising—pink light at the window. My eyes move again to the tree. An elm—elm leaves outside the window. A shadow memory stirs.

Twenty minutes, the loud voice said. I rise from a strange bed and look for something to wear.

As I lean over to put on my shoes, something heavy swings across my shoulder. I run a hand along thick dark hair drawn back into a single braid. Peg. And an unknown voice who wants

to go bike riding in the park. I try to remember if I know how to ride a bike.

At last I'm ready, standing hesitant before the closed door of the room. I don't like going through closed doors. But I know I must, and when the door opens into a hallway that fits the bedroom, I feel safer.

The house is quiet, but the presence of others is here. They're probably sleeping. The house is comfortable, homey. I wonder about the other residents who share it with me. I feel odd. Suddenly I turn, scanning all the windows I can see, but none are of stained glass. I don't know why I thought they might be.

*He looks puzzled.
"Look, you sure
you're okay?"
With great
effort, I manage
to sound light,
"I seem to have
a problem—
with sliding ..."*

I see her as I step onto the front porch. A young woman about my age in shorts and tank top, loading a bike into the back of a sporty little van. She has bright red hair, and when she sees me she gestures urgently.

"I got your bike—come on! Let's get out there while it's still early."

I obey dumbly; soon I'm riding beside her through early morning streets. I need to speak rarely, for she converses quite well alone.

"God, what a morning! Makes you want to get out there and do things! I love St. Louis in the spring."

St. Louis. The Big Muddy. The giant arch. That's all I remember ever knowing about St. Louis.

"I get so sick of being shut up in that office all week, don't you? By Friday I'm ready to fly apart. Speaking of flying, I'd like to learn how. What do you say—want to take lessons with me?"

Evidently we work together. I wonder what it is we do.

"Did you get the big 'we are a team' lecture yesterday? Connie and I got called in—separately, of course. It was hilarious, Peg. Know how Jerry's face puffs up and turns red when he's trying

to be sincere? Terry," he says, "you're a good little worker, but sometimes you're a real pain in the ass."

Terry. Her name's Terry. "Did you get the same act?" I don't know. "I'll never tell," I answer lamely.

She doesn't seem to mind my silence. Soon we're pulling our bikes from the van at the edge of a large wooded area. Terry's an explosion of energy. I follow slowly. I must know how to ride—we've evidently done this before.

She heads for a shaded path marked for joggers only.

"Are we supposed to ride there?" I venture.

A loud laugh trails over her shoulder. "Of course not, but that never stopped us before."

We start out slowly along the wide smooth path, but soon Terry's sprinting ahead, ferocious energy unleashed. The trail winds alternately through wooded spots and rolling green space. We encounter numerous joggers, but none seems to mind that we're trespassing on their turf. It's a beautiful place, quite large, and the air is cool and fragrant, sun just warm enough to avoid chill. The general air is one of peace and relaxation; we see several groups of people cooking breakfast on open grills. Everyone smiles and waves, and we wave back. I like this place.

Terry swoops in and out of my vision, far ahead. There are so many elms—big, stately, protective. I feel a special affinity with elms. I pass into a canopied grove of them, and I lift my face to breathe in their presence.

The sound is slight, but enough for me to jerk my attention back to the trail. Where did that sharp turn come from, and who are the two startled men staring at me with wide eyes just in front of my handlebars?

I have time for only a blurred impression of headbands and sweaty faces before instinct takes over. I soar off the path and into the trees, bike skidding, sliding, sliding, trying to throw me, to smash to the ground, but I fight it, force it between trees and over bumpy ground. I won't fall, I refuse to fall; it becomes a deadly duel between the bike and me, exhilarating in a way, and I hear a sound I almost don't recognize, the sound of myself laughing aloud.

Leaves and branches of underbrush whip my face and arms, but I wrestle the bike and I win, finally thumping to an upright stop against a tree. The whole episode takes seconds, although it seems longer; and I let the bike fall, steadying myself against the tree before

I turn back to find the two joggers and apologize for almost running them down.

"MARILYN?" My breathing slows. I can still feel myself smiling. A near miss, yet I feel elated, triumphant.

"Marilyn, is that you? Honest to God, it is!"

My head comes up slowly. I'm in bright sunlight. Exhaust fumes sting my nose. Two young men stand quite near me. One reaches to touch me, but I draw away. My hand falls from the bus stop sign I'm clutching. A street—a city street. Traffic roars around me, but I don't take my eyes from the two men.

They wear faded jeans and bright shirts. The taller one is blond. I can't see the back of his head, but I think there's the beginning of a bald spot there. The other, darker with a thick mustache, reaches to touch me again, and this time I allow it. His hand is warm and friendly on my shoulder. I don't know their names, but I think I've seen them before.

"Marilyn, it's good to see you," the blond one says. "Don't be afraid. You remember us, don't you? Randy and Mike from The Elms? We've been looking everywhere for you."

He moves closer, puts his arm around me, and I like it. I don't know if he's Randy or Mike, but I let him hold me. The shorter one soothes my hair. I can tell they really care about me. What did they say about The Elms?

"Marilyn, the mustache one says gently, 'we've all been so worried. Where've you been?'"

"Sliding," I answer, but I don't know why I say it.

Gently they lead me away from the curb. They're on either side of me, touching. I feel their warmth and I'm not afraid. For some reason I trust these two men.

"Do you know who I really am?" I ask hopefully.

"Of course, sweetheart. Marilyn Price. You stay with us at The Elms, remember? Will you come with us now? Dr. Collier sure will be glad to see you. You'd like to see the doctor again, wouldn't you?"

We're walking slowly. "I need some things explained," I say. "Really important things. Can Dr. Collier do that?"

"Absolutely." The blond one hugs me. "Now, don't worry about a thing, Marilyn. Mike and Randy have you now."

As soon as they bring me to this place, I have the sense of belonging. I don't know if I remember it or if it just seems right, but everyone knows me here and they're all happy to see me back.

The chubby little woman who takes me away from Mike and Randy tells me The Elms is a place for sick people. Her name is Betty Brown. She says I should know her, but I'm not sure I do. Yet I'm not afraid to be with her, and when she says doctors here can help me with my sickness, I cry because I'm so grateful to be found.

Betty Brown takes me to my room. "We'll get you freshened up, honey, then I'll take you to see Dr. Collier. Honestly, the doctor's so anxious to see you. Isn't it nice to be back in your old room?"

It's a pleasant room—bright and sunny. It seems familiar, I think. There's an elm tree outside the window, and



the sun bathes a stained glass mobile, swirling soft colors as it moves in gentle currents of air. I don't have to be afraid anymore. These people know who I am and can help me. While Betty Brown bustles around helping me dress, I talk.

I talk as if I'll never stop. I try to explain my fear of sliding. I tell her of the shadow memories, of trying not to lose hold of things, of impressions that I've been in many strange places as other people. It's important that she know this. Betty Brown nods as I talk, and says people here will understand these things.

"It's all part of the sickness, Marilyn. You haven't really done these things, your mind just thinks you have. They can't really happen, do you understand?"

"Can't really happen," I repeat, wanting desperately to believe her.

"That's right. After the doctors help you it won't happen anymore. Just keep telling yourself that it isn't possible. Hold onto that, okay?"

It isn't possible. Finally something to hold onto. It's simply a sickness and everyone at The Elms is going to help me make it go away.

After we're outside in cheerful corridors I remember I forgot to look at my face in the mirror, but it isn't impor-

tant anymore. I know who I am. I'm Marilyn Price and I'm not afraid.

Dr. Collier's door is closed. Betty Brown raps once and leaves me with a warm squeeze.

"The doctor's expecting you, hon. Go on in."

"Wait," I whisper. "How will I find my way back to my room?"

"Don't worry. I'll come back for you. I promise, Marilyn, it's going to be okay."

She leaves me, and I stand facing Dr. Collier's door. I feel very tired; just for a moment I close my eyes and lean my forehead against the door, thinking hard on what I know. I'm safe now. It isn't possible.

The door's ajar—it swings open under the slight pressure from my head.

I FEEL SO TIRED. I RAISE MY HEAD SLOWLY. I've been catching a quick rest with my head on my arms, but now someone has entered and I straighten.

The room swims into focus—an office, casually arranged—soft furniture and clear colors. A pleasant room—why am I here?

A young woman hesitates inside the open door, her attitude expectant. I study her carefully. Should I know her? The face is familiar, almost frighteningly familiar, yet I can't connect a name to it. I watch her, hoping for some clue to tell me what's happening here.

She doesn't speak; she waits. A pulse begins to flutter in my throat. I scan the room, looking for something, some sign of identity. Hanging on the wall at my shoulder are framed certificates—medical degrees, all bearing the name Ellen C. Collier. I'm the one sitting behind the desk—it's apparent this office belongs to me. Wait—there was something—hold onto something—

I clear my throat. "Can I help you?" I ask hesitantly, and she sits instantly, leaning eagerly forward in her chair.

I bend over the desk, scan things scattered across it, and a piece of bright pink paper catches my eye. A note: "Ellen—good news! Marilyn Price is back. I'll bring her in at 3:00. Betty."

I wear no watch, but a little clock on the desk reads 3:08. I study it intently until it changes to 3:09. Blood begins pounding in my temple. When I look up, that face still waits for me. My hands start to tremble. I grip a pencil to hide this and read the note again. I swallow thickness in my throat. Now I know whose face it is.

"Hello, Marilyn," I say. "I'm Dr. Collier. I'm pleased to see you're back." And the fear comes. ■



OVER THE FENCE

**They were a small-town,
bush-league baseball team
cursed with more than
their fair share of bad luck.
But today Fate is going to
throw them a curve, for
that luck is about to
change, in a most unusual
manner. . . .**

JOHN MACLAY

ILLUSTRATION BY MARY FLOCK

THERE WENT ANOTHER ONE. YOU COULD TELL BY THE SHARP CRACK OF THE bat even if you hadn't been watching the loaded pitch, the roundhouse swing. Another one—arching into the cloudless, deep-blue spring sky, its tiny shadow almost visible on the dark-green grass below. More than enough on it to clear the gawking outfielder, the chain-link fence at three seventy-five in left. Going . . . going . . . gone.

And enough to bring Lefty out of the dugout again.

"Son-of-a-damn-bitch," our manager fumed, to the slack-jawed occupant of the mound. "This is supposed to be goddamned batting practice, not a free lunch!" He threw up his hands. "What kinda practice do they get, if you can't even throw 'em a curve?"

"I . . . uh . . ."

"And what's more," Lefty went on, "we ain't exactly the majors, ya know, just a small-town team. Those little round white things ain't free!" He calculated. "Five bucks a pop, times maybe twenty a day—Geez, a cool hundred! And though we got a sponsor, nobody can be happy about that!"

"Yeah, but—" Slim, our pitcher, pushed it, and I winced, knowing pitching wasn't exactly our strong point this year—"we *do* get 'em back."

"Not this year, we don't!" Lefty's eyes flashed. "The damn things keep disappearing." He shot a glance in my direction. "Lewis!"

I winced again, from where I was standing near first, because that's me. "You're supposed to be smart. Go out there and find them balls!"

By the time I reached the chain-link fence and climbed over, at least three more balls had gone sailing above me and it, and I could hear the manager's renewed cursing far-off. I'd seen one of them bounce on the parking lot beyond, but then . . .

In the paved lot, I looked around, counted mentally. From the way it

FENCE

had been going today, the place should have been littered with baseballs—at least two dozen. But it wasn't. I picked up the one or two I found, stuffed them in my pocket. Took off my cap, stared up at the sun, scratched my sweaty head, looked back down . . .

And that's when I noticed the dog.

A little thing, one of those yappy ones, with long white hair. Trotting busily out of the woods at its edge, onto the lot. Intent on the latest ball that had landed. Going for it, not even bothering with me, the human competition. Stretching its tiny jaws open to their limit, picking it up. Then trotting, head nodding with the burden, back where it had come from.

I heard the shouts of batting practice, from a distance, behind me. But Lefty had said, "Find them balls!" So I followed the dog into the woods.

And met a little old lady standing among the trees.

She was a stereotype—as I must have been, too, in my baseball uniform. She was shriveled, bony, bent; dressed in a navy-blue dress with lace around the collar, and high black shoes; she was snowy-haired, like her dog. Her clear old eyes met mine for a moment, with a snap of recognition . . .

But then she went back to the business at hand.

PROFILE JOHN MACLAY

In the past four years, John MacLAY has made a name for himself as both a talented short-story writer and a successful small-press publisher. He's published over two dozen stories in publications such as *Night Cry*, *Horror Show*, and *Footsteps*. And he was the publisher of the acclaimed *Masques* anthologies, edited by J. N. Williamson. *Masques II* is still available for \$19.95 from MacLAY and Associates (P.O. Box 16253, Baltimore, MD 21210), and stories from both anthologies are contained in *The Best of Masques*, to be published by Berkley Books in June. Seventeen of MacLAY's stories appear in *Other Engagements*, published by Dream House (P.O. Box 864, Madison, WI 53701), and his most recent tale, "True," appears in *Forteen Vicious Valentines*, just published by Avon.

"Good boy," she croaked—and the little dog deposited the baseball from his mouth into her palm. She transferred it to a shopping bag at her side—containing, I saw when she opened it, the yield of today's practice, as it probably had yesterday's, and that of the day before.

"Uh . . . ma'am," I finally said.

"Yes, young man?"

"Uh . . . you know . . . we can use those balls again. It's . . . uh . . . great that you take your dog on a walk here, neat that he fetches 'em . . . cute little dog"—I tried to pet him but he growled—"but . . ."

I was met with a look of deep senility—yet at the same time such deep reasonableness, that I wondered if the senility was somehow mine.

"But, young man," the old lady said, "Finders Keepers; Losers Weepers!"

I took off my cap, scratched my head again, looked up at the spring sky. Visualized her small, little-old-lady apartment that she shared with her dog probably in the new complex beyond the woods, filled with what must be, by now, at least several hundred little white balls. Our balls, I couldn't help thinking . . .

"But ma'am . . ."

"Your name?" she challenged.

"Lewis, ma'am. But . . ."

"Yes, Mr. Lewis?"

I was almost defeated—but I should apologize?

"Well, damn it—I'm sorry—it's just that it's been tough enough for us this year, with our pitchers giving games away and all, so that the car dealer who sponsors us is thinking of taking his money away. And now you taking our baseballs. I mean, they do cost something . . ."

The little old lady looked faraway for a moment—as if she weren't quite there.

"Oh . . ." she said at last. "You mean"—she gestured weakly to her shopping bag—"that these are important to you?"

"Yes," I replied, throwing up my hands. And thinking somehow, though I naturally fought it, of how the macho pursuits of young men are naturally foreign to little old ladies and their yappy white dogs—just like their pursuits might seem to us.

" . . . It's just that, ma'am," I went on, trying somehow to appeal to her, "you've got to . . . to understand."

She looked at me then, suddenly beaming; her eyes clear, her skin white and transparent, mysteriously beyond senility.

"I do, now," she said. Then she

turned and walked away into the woods, her little white dog worshipfully in tow.

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN, LEWIS?" Lefty fumed, when I'd retraced my steps over the empty parking lot, re-climbed the chain-link fence, then re-crossed the grassy outfield toward where he, and my teammates, were waiting. "You tell me our balls have been stolen by a friggin' over-the-hill basket case and her goddamned dog and you didn't even try to take 'em back?"

"No . . ." It hadn't even occurred to me, I realized—the whole thing just seemed so crazy.

Lefty considered. "Well, we'll settle her hash." He stomped on the infield dust, while the rest of the team watched. "That lot's company property. We'll get the police!"

"I . . . I don't think that'd be a good idea . . ." I tried—still, I realized wonderingly, under the old lady's . . . spell, for want of a better word.

"Who asked you, Lewis?" Lefty spluttered then. "Are you the friggin' manager?"

"Well . . ." I didn't, really, know how to explain. Except that the old lady had said she *did* understand. But did that mean she'd call her little dog off, stop taking the balls? Or even, maybe, give them all back? Or . . .?

"Please let me handle it," I tried. "Let me go out there tomorrow, and . . ."

"Okay!" Lefty bellowed, a strange look in his eye. "I will put you out there tomorrow."

My teammates were smiling at me, and I wondered why.

"Because," he clinched it, "in case you've forgotten, Mr. Smarty-pants, tomorrow's a game. And you, fool!" he turned and walked away—*are benched*, until further notice."

If you've ever been part of a team, then suddenly not part of it, due to some little quirk, some much-regretted impulse of you' own, you'll know how I felt the next day. I'd tried to rationalize it the night before, over more than one beer alone—I hadn't even dared to call up my woman—but the fact remained that I'd "gone to bat" . . . for a little old lady sided with her, and against my own team.

And when I stood, that next spring afternoon, in uniform—but on the opposite side of that chain-link fence, in the parking lot, while "my" team, the opposing team, and all the townspeople in the stands, including my probably-former woman, stared out at me, as if I were some sort of freak—

I cursed the little old lady and her ridiculous dog.

But still, out of some impulse more insane than her own, I somehow rooted for her—to prove me right in standing up for her, to *come through*.

The game started, and it was no exception to our others that season. Two walks, then a three-run homer, in the top of the first—our pitching, as the big-league commentators say, was certainly “suspect.” At least I snagged up the home-run ball; the little old lady didn’t get that.

But as our team came up to bat, she was there again, her white dog preceding her; toddling slowly, like some hallowed yet obscene apparition, out of the woods.

“Hello ... ma’am,” I said when she’d finally come up to me, summoning all the politeness my own sainted mother had taught me.

“Oh,” she replied, “it’s you—the nice young man. But—her clear old eyes surveyed me, then the game beyond—“what are you doing ... out here?”

It was all I could do to keep from going all the way over the edge.

“You know that,” I muttered. “You said you *understood*. I believed you, and what did it get me? Now I’m a laughing-stock, off the team ...”

She considered for a long, senile moment, a sweet smile on her parchment face.

“Yes,” she finally answered, “I see. But I do still understand. And, as I told you yesterday (Or was it the day before? I lose track) if it’s important to you ...”

I looked into her clear old eyes. “You realize,” I said, “that I can’t let you keep taking our balls. Next one that comes over the fence, is mine—and I don’t care if your dog bites my arm off!”

Her expression was patient, mysterious. “I do wish you wouldn’t talk that way, young man,” she replied. “Please—let’s *play the game out*.”

And, in spite of myself, I did.

The afternoon was unreal. We all just stood out there, beyond the fence, watching the game: the old lady with a look of fierce concentration in her eyes, her yappy but now somehow quiet little dog, and me.

In the bottom of the second, our team tied it, with a three-run homer—she sent her dog for the ball, smilingly took it from him, put it in her shopping bag. For some reason, I didn’t even object.

In the top of the fifth, the other team batted around—six scores, two home runs, again added to her collection. I made a show of going for the

balls, as a gesture—but only that—to Lefty.

And in the seventh, another ball for the lady from the other team. She didn’t get as many as she’d had during batting practice—our pitchers did buckle down when push came to shove—but still, as the game wore on to the bottom of the eighth, it was a familiar story, with us behind ten to three.

That’s when the little old lady turned to me with an impossibly serene, superior, *determined* smile.

“Young man,” she said, even grasping my arm with her gnarled fingers, “I want *more* balls.” She paused. “And so, I think, do you.”

The rest of the game, on that sud-



denly beautiful spring day was like a dream. She told me her “powers” were stronger during batting practice when our pitchers were more relaxed. That’s why there were always more baseballs for her. She said she’d thought it wrong to be inhospitable to visitors. That’s why, during games, more of *their* baseballs had come over the fence than ours—until I’d set her right. She said she’d waited mischievously until now to really show me ...

What she could do. And, I watched spellbound, as if in another world, as ball after ball sailed toward us—over the fence.

In that bottom of the eighth, we came up with *four* back-to-back homers—a new record.

And in the bottom of the ninth with all bases loaded, the little white dog went romping gleefully, almost conspiratorially, after a grand slam, that won it for us, eleven to ten.

I was so caught up in the beauty of it—the cheers from the green field beyond, the balls floating over the fence, me jumping up and down—that I didn’t notice the little old lady walk away. When I turned, she and her little white

dog were gone—and I hadn’t even thanked her.

Then I was climbing back over the fence, running to join my teammates—and Lefty, who stood waiting, an unfathomable look on his face.

“Lewis,” he finally said when everybody had calmed down. Spitting in the dust, that classic baseball manager’s fire in his eye. “I was watching you. I don’t know what you did ... maybe I do ... but it’s good enough for me.”

He spat again. “You—and that friggin’ old lady!”

I should have dropped it at that, but I didn’t. So, as everyone trooped off to the showers, I stayed behind, tried to tell him exactly *what* had happened. About ... balls. About *her*, crazy as she was, yet understanding, in the end.

Lefty put a hand on my shoulder. Thought a minute, looked out toward the fence. “You think you’ve *discovered* something, huh, Lewis?”

“Well, I—”

He smiled. “Well, maybe you have. I never seen it happen just like that, but ...”

“Yeah?”

“What I do know,” he finished, “is that *when* it happens, you accept it. You don’t put some kind of macho whammy on it.”

Now he led me off to the clubhouse. “So, Lewis, from now on you’re out there, close to *her*. Don’t see any reason to do like today, though—I’ll just put you in center field.”

“Thanks,” I answered—and instantly knew my mistake.

“Don’t thank me,” Lefty bellowed, just before we joined the others. “You just better hope that little old lady ain’t a goddamned figment of our imagination—that she’s out there, tomorrow!”

But she was there—and I had plenty of time to thank her, and her little white dog for good measure, across the outfield fence—the next day, and the next. Through batting practices, of course, dozens of balls sailing over my head. But the games, too. And the magic even seemed to work at away games. Our pitching was still “suspect,” but we’d still manage to win by a run or two, like those Baltimore Orioles, nine to eight, or eight to six.

And when that glorious, fulfilling season was over—when we’d turned it all the way around, even won the finals, and that little old lady had put the last baseball in her shopping bag and toddled off, waving, into the woods, and I asked Lefty if I should go after her, he took me aside, shook his head.

“Balls is cheap, Lewis,” he said. “Balls is cheap.” ■



THE PROMISE OF WARMTH

Each of us dreams of a place in the sun, a refuge from the cold realities of life. This is a tale of a man who found that place, in a small town south of the border where dreams—and nightmares—come true . . .

MICHAEL BLUMLEIN



HF BELLY SKIN IS COOL, and warming. It lies on bark. Hunger, warming. A lid lifts. An eye watches. It waits.

A low roar grinds in the distance. In the clearing it is bright and soundless. No cry of bird, no leap of rodent. Heat, mid-day, wilting. Silence.

A butterfly shivers by, vanishes behind a broad leaf. Another appears from shadow, flashing blue wing eyes. A beautiful creature, its movements are coarse, the spasms of the insect mind. It flutters through a veil of vines, lighting on a crimson flower. Once, twice, it bats its wings, then jerks into the air. It nears the waiting branch.

A ray of sun darts past leaf and limb, touching the butterfly, pinning it. The beat of a wing. An eye moves, a mouth, a flicker of flesh. The tongue snaps, strikes, retreats. The butterfly is gone. The eye closes, the hunger soothed. The body is content, and warming.

A ray of sun darts past leaf and limb, touching the butterfly, pinning it. The beat of a wing. An eye moves, a mouth, a flicker of flesh. The tongue snaps, strikes, retreats. The butterfly is gone. The eye closes, the hunger soothed. The body is content, and warming.

"I'M NERVOUS," SAID ROGER. JILL FUMBLED with her wallet, trying to make the oversized paper bills fit in the slot made for the long and narrow U.S. dollars.

"I really am."

She looked up to see if he was serious. He was, in his fashion, or so she decided. She stuffed the unfinished business in her back pocket.

"C'mon, it'll be fine," She laid a hand on his arm, but the heavy lines remained above his eyes. She changed her tactic.

"No, you're right, it's going to be horrible. We'll probably sit on the beach all day, and if it doesn't rain, it'll

be too hot, or if it's not too hot the mosquitoes'll eat us alive, or if there're no mosquitoes, there'll be something else in the sand, chiggers or no-see-ums, or something worse, tropical, invisible, a venom that doesn't make you die, just makes you itch, and swell, and itch some more . . ." She took a breath, ready to go on.

Being the comedian was not natural to her, it was not the flavor of her other relationships. She'd learned how to tease to make Roger laugh. Laughing, he would sometimes relax the grip he had on himself.

"You're right," he grumbled. "It's going to be just like that." The lines deepened, then suddenly his face lifted. He laughed and grabbed Jill.

"I'm crazy," he said, hugging her. "I know it."

"You are."

"I can't help it. I'm worried that we're not going to have a good time."

"Relax," She took his hand as they walked. "Have a few margaritas."

"You like it when I'm drunk, don't you?"

"I like it when you let go a little."

"I bet you do." He stopped, grinning, and kissed her on the cheek. Moving his lips slowly up to her ear, he made faint clucking sounds and tongued the entrance.

"Not here, Roger. Let's go back to the hotel."

"C'mon, let's sneak behind one of the bushes. A quickie. Au naturel."

"Someone might see us."

"Let 'em, we got nothing to hide." He reached for her arm, but she held him away.

"Stop playing."

"Relax," he said, twisting the word. "You're so uptight."

She stiffened. With a hurt and angry look she turned away.

Roger watched her leave. The

sounds of the village, of chickens and children and jukebox music hung in the air. He cursed himself.

"Jill!" he called "Jill!"

He ran after her, stirring up whirls of dust in the road. He avoided a rock, stubbed his toe on another. When he caught up with her he walked to the side, uttering apologies. She studiously ignored him. Finally he ran ahead and turned back to face her. She had no choice but to stop.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I am. Really. I didn't mean to be like that."

"Why do you do that?"

"I don't know. I don't mean to hurt you."

"No?"

"No, I don't. I don't like it."

"Really?" She seemed surprised.

"Really."

"Then stop it. Be nice." She brushed the back of his cheek with her fingers.

"I'm trying. It's slow, but I'm trying to change."

"Do it soon, okay?" She hugged him, warming to his affection. Roger held on with relief.

Several moments passed.

"Let's go back to the hotel" Jill murmured.

"Yeah. Let's."

"Kiss me first." Her face had already begun to float.

They kissed. Hand in hand they walked back.

THE HAMMOCK HUNG BETWEEN TWO branches that had twined behind the low wooden sill that served as the hotel's front desk. A man with sleepy eyes lay sunken in it, a leg draped carelessly over the edge. Behind him on the wall were nailed two boards. The top one was painted white and carried the name of the hotel scrawled in bold, irregular letters. LAS TRES CABEZAS. The other was unpainted and weathered.

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Written across in Spanish and English were the words CHECKOUT TIME 2 P.M. DO NOT BE LATE. Off to the side was a large cooler filled with Modelo, Superior, Corona, Tecate, and a variety of soft drinks. A child, a young girl, stood in the corner sipping a Coke. Her dark eyes followed Roger as he came to the counter. He put the room key down then leaned forward, smiling at the man in the hammock.

"Buenos dias."

"Dias." A grunt came from the vicinity of the man's mouth.

"Cómo está?"

"Aquí, no mas."

Roger nodded and smiled, while he thought what to say next. He had talked to the man, Carlos, the afternoon before. They had chatted about the village, its peacefulness, the foreigner who came to visit. The conversation had been lively and Carlos, animated. Now, even though it was morning and the heat had not yet risen with its heavy hand, the man seemed tired.

"Hot, huh?" Roger said, lifting his straw hat and brushing his hair, already wet.

"Makes 'hotter later," the man said with an effort.

"Hard night?" Roger asked, strangely curious why the man was so sluggish this early.

Carlos moved his head a fraction, not enough to disturb his torpid peace, and slit his eyes in Roger's direction. His mouth dropped open and the tongue came out to circle his dry lips. A low, echoing sound rose from his

throat, and it took Roger a moment to understand that he was speaking.

"I am tired, *hijo*. Still sleeping. Come back later. Hotter. For some, heat makes..." He sighed. "...come alive." He fell back into his daze.

Roger stared. He caught a glimpse of the girl. She was watching him.

"Is he okay?" he asked. "*Está bien?*"

She sipped the Coke.

"El," he pointed. "*Bien? Está bien?*"

She sipped. Finally she nodded.

Roger frowned and turned away. He was shaking his head when Jill came down the stairs to his right.

"What's wrong?"

"The old man," he motioned.

"Carlos. He looks sick."

"Did you talk to him?"

"Yeah. He says he's just tired. That he wakes up later, when it's hotter."

"Weird. The heat puts me to sleep."

"Me too."

They started to walk.

"You worried about him?"

"Not really. I'd just like to understand."

"Yeah. Well, give it time. Maybe we'll feel that way too after we've been here a while."

"Maybe," he said, unconvinced.

"Don't worry about it." She threaded an arm behind his back. "We're here for us, Roger, not him."

"Yeah, I guess you're right."

They walked for a while in silence.

"So what should we do today?"

"How about the beach?" Roger proposed, stirring from his reveries. "La Piel."

"Sure. We can stop in the market on the way. Pick up something for later."

"Sounds good."

They steered toward the center of town, past a waterless fountain, turning right at the cobbled road that led to the market. They passed a burro strapped down beneath a pile of wood, and a bit further they came alongside a woman carrying a pig. The pig squealed, and the woman let it drop to the ground, holding it close to her side with a short rope wrapped around its neck. Jill stepped down, making clicking sounds with her tongue to attract the pig's attention. The woman gave her an odd look and tugged it away. Jill stood up, feeling foolish.

On the other side of the street they passed an outdoor barber shop, a simple wooden chair sitting on the dusty ground with a jagged mirror hanging from a tree next to it. Further along was a long white building with FUNERALES written in big black letters and several open wooden coffins lying in the shed at one end. A man was selling peanuts on the stoop in front, measuring them out with an old Campbell's Soup can. The market was just across the street.

They entered and wound their way past cluttered stalls until they came to the open space in the center. There was a crowd of women, some sitting, some standing at tables piled high with vegetables and fruits. Others sat cross-legged on the ground, food spread before them on an old cloth, a piece of muslin. The place was crowded and noisy. Jill and Roger bumped their way from stand to stand, touching and smelling until Roger had satisfied himself that they had found the best papaya in the marketplace. He paid for it and they turned to leave, when something caught the corner of his eye.

Nearby, a dark, wiry man was squatting on the ground. He wore a tattered shirt and bruised hat, which was tilted forward on his head. At his feet lay a coarse gunny sack. He had raised the lip with one hand and was searching inside with the other. The woman who stood over him bent down, following his movements with her eyes. The man said a quick word and she nodded. He pulled back his hand. In it, grasped tightly, were two lizards. Big ones. Their claws had been tied back, and their swollen white bellies moved in and out like tiny bellows. They were alive.

Roger watched, transfixed, as the man lifted the creatures by the tails, swinging them toward the woman. She extended a hand, and with the tips of her fingers stroked the lacy green backs, the heads. Gently, she squeezed the bellies. Roger shivered, and the woman looked up. Her wizened face strained

PROFILE

MICHAEL BLUMLEIN



With a handful of short stories, Michael Blumlein has earned a reputation as one of the most incisive new authors of science fiction on the scene today. His work has appeared in *Omni*, *Interzone*, and *Semiotext(e)*, among other publications. His short story, "The Brains of Rats," was a finalist for last year's World Fantasy Award. His first novel, *The Movement of Mountains*, was published in 1987, and his second, *A Native in the Land*, will be published next year by St. Martin's Press. In addition to writing, Blumlein is a practicing physician, and serves on the faculty of the School of Medicine at the University of California at San Francisco.

against the glare of the morning. Suddenly she smiled. The few teeth still in her mouth were outlined in gold.

She said something which he didn't understand, but he mumbled some words in return. She smiled again, then turned back to the man and spoke rapidly. Once or twice she gestured in Roger's direction. When she finished, the man nodded. He gave her the animals and stood up. He was not tall. With a hand he beckoned to Roger.

His eyes were black, the lids lashed and hardly visible. When he grinned, his face cracked like a desert.

"*Qué necesita, señor?*"

"*Nada*," Roger mumbled.

The man smiled. "*Nada?*"

Roger shook his head. He felt queasy.

The man placed a hand on his shoulder and knelt down, pulling Roger with him. Jill stood nearby, uninvolved and bored.

The man grasped the edge of the sack with one hand and thrust the other deep inside. Slowly he drew it out.

Roger's heart quickened. A bead of sweat grew at his lip. In the man's hand a tail appeared, thick and taut. Bound legs, then a back, humped and green. Unconsciously, Roger reached for it. He touched the cool and puckered skin, stroking the ridge of the spine. He fingered the forehead, the blunt snout, and lifted the chin. He turned the head until it faced his own.

The eyes blinked and remained open. The tongue danced out, brushed his hand, disappeared. Roger stared. The sun beat on his neck. Dimly, he felt its warmth.

A hand touched his back. It startled him.

"Huh?"

"I said, I'm getting tired of standing here. If you want to stay, I'll meet you at the beach."

He shook his head, trying to clear it. "No, wait. I'm ready. I'll come." He stood up, and felt faint. He put a hand on Jill's shoulder.

"You okay?"

"A little dizzy ..."

He waited for it to pass.

"I'm all right now."

"You sure?"

"Yeah. I'm okay."

"Good. Let's go then."

She started out, and in a moment Roger followed. After a few steps he stopped, briefly, and looked back. A woman behind him was weighing a bunch of bananas, and next to her another was dusting flies from pieces of cut pineapple. Beyond were more people, and in the midst of the crowd he

caught another glimpse of the old man and woman squatted down over the gunny sack. Turning away, he hurried to catch up with Jill.

EVEN IN THE SHADE THE HEAT DOMINATED. It hung on the air like balls of cotton. Jill wiped her forehead and put down her book. She reached for the beer. It was lukewarm, cool by comparison to her mouth. She squeezed a lime onto the metal top, sucked the juice off the rim, chased it with a gulp from the can. She wiped off the foam from her lip and took another drink. She was content.

"Roger, you're getting burnt." She



looked at the body sprawled face down in the sand beside her.

"Mmm."

"The backs of your legs are really red." Unconsciously, she moved her chair into the center of the jalapa's shifting shadow.

"You should come in out of the sun. Or put on some cream."

"Too much trouble," he grunted.

"Really. You should."

"Uh-huh."

"Stubborn."

"What?"

"Nothing."

He stirred, raising his head. "You called me stubborn."

"You are."

"I'm relaxing."

"Good."

"I am." He flopped back down on the sand.

"I'm glad."

"Me too." He let out a sigh, then with a sudden spasm flipped over so that his face and sand-speckled belly pointed up.

"What's cha thinking?"

"Nothing."

"A peso."

He smiled. "Lizards."

"What about lizards?"

"They really know how to relax. When it's hot, they just lie in the sun. Eat when they feel like it. When it's cold, they don't do anything."

"Sounds nice."

"Yeah."

"Unless you get eaten by a bird."

"They wouldn't eat a big one, Not a big one."

"Like an iguana."

"Yeah. They wouldn't eat an iguana. Too big."

Jill drank some of her beer. "What made you think of them?"

"I don't know. It seems like a pretty good life. Eat, sleep, sunbathe ..."

She laughed. "Sounds like the vacation's doing some good."

"And another thing," he said, leaning toward her. "They've got fast tongues."

He flashed his out and licked her calf. "Yuck!" He spat on the ground. "You taste terrible!"

"Sea and Ski Number Six," she laughed. "Next time try the lips."

He tried to drown the taste with some beer, then jumped up and raced to the water. Splashing in like a child, he swam off. Jill watched, shaking her head. It was mid-day, sweltering. Roger was the only one in the water.

In a short while she caught sight of a man carrying a tray with drinks. He had plodded from a stand far down the beach. She lifted her beer, pointing to it.

"Una mas," she said.

He nodded, and Jill finished off the can. Then she lay back and closed her eyes, letting the heat and alcohol take her away.

Later, when it was time to leave, after gathering the towels and throwing away the remains of the papaya, she went looking for Roger. He had come back, they had talked a little and smooched, and then had bounded off again.

She called his name. And again, impatiently. There was no response. She had nearly decided to go back alone when she saw some tracks in the sand. Not exactly tracks but a wide rut, as if some broad object had been dragged along the beach. It began near where Roger had gone to lie in the sun. Jill threw the day bag over her shoulder and followed the trail.

For a short distance it ran parallel to the shore, passing over a hump of sand before making a sharp turn to the water. It gave out at the base of a low rock, the first of several stretching in a line into the bay. The ones close to shore were covered by urchins and tiny

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mollusks. The tide at that hour, near sunset, was low, and the rocks were dry. She climbed up.

The surface was not steep, but it was sharp and in shadow. She picked her way carefully, in a few minutes reaching the top. The low sun lit her face, for a moment blinding her. When her eyes cleared, she looked down to the other side.

It was flatter, the far edge sliding into the surf. Some cormorants mingled with pelicans, oiling their wings. Off to one side lay Roger, sprawled belly down on the rock. His head faced the dying sun.

"Roger? Roger, are you all right?"

She began to climb down, putting the cutting pieces of rock out of her mind. The big birds leapt from their roosts, screeching.

"Roger!"

She reached him, touched his back.

"Roger?" She lifted his head.

"Roger! Answer me!"

He blinked, then slowly stretched. Straightening his arms, he pushed himself up.

His chest and belly were covered with scratches, streaks of dried blood. He turned his head from side to side.

"Jill," he said dreamily.

She waited, holding her breath.

"It was so peaceful. The rocks were so warm."

Her throat felt tight. "Are you all right?"

He blinked. "Is something wrong?"

"Stop joking, Roger."

"No, really. What's wrong?" He looked at her, saw the fury rising. "Jill..."

"Stop it," she screamed. "Stop it! Stop!" She began to cry.

"I don't understand," he said helplessly. "What did I do?"

"You tell me."

"I don't know." He strained, trying to think. "Because I went off by myself?"

She was trembling.

"I didn't mean to be gone so long, Jill. It just happened. I guess I fell asleep. The sun felt so good..."

"I thought you were dead."

"I should have said something," he confessed. "I should have told you where I was going."

"What did you do, crawl the whole way?"

He looked at her curiously. "I guess I did, didn't I?" He fingered some of the cuts, then grinned sheepishly. "Nutty,

huh?"

"Something's wrong, Roger. You scare me."

"I don't mean to."

She looked at him, shaking her head.

"I'm sorry," he said softly. "I truly am."

"Let's go back, okay?" she wiped her eyes, then helped him up. "You should get cleaned up."

"They don't hurt."

"Don't start again, Roger."

"Really..."

She gave him a look and he shut up. She turned and began climbing, slowly, carefully. Roger waited until she was over the top, then scurried after her.

*The lizard's eyes
blinked. The
tongue danced out,
brushed Roger's
hand, disappeared.
The sun beat on
his neck. Dimly,
he felt its
warmth.*

BY THE TIME THEY HAD SHOWERED AND dressed, it was well past sunset. The pink had become violet, and bright stars were beginning to poke through the sky. Tired fishermen brought late boats to their berths. In the bay's reaches, where the ebb had already erased the shallow fingers of water, skiffs sat in the mud, moored to a piling or a branch on the shore. Women and children bargained for the day's catch, for veta, calamare, huachenango. A young boy played with a sailfish, opening and closing the sail like a fan. On the porch outside their room Jill stood with a beer. She took a sip and leaned against the rail. She stared out.

Roger appeared, shirtless and barefoot, and walked forward, slipping his arms around her. He kissed her on the neck. She murmured and turned to him. They touched lips, briefly, and then Roger pulled away. He yawned.

"I'm sleepy."

"You got too much sun. How's your chest?"

He touched it. "Feels fine."

"Did you put on some cream?"

He nodded, but to Jill's eye he needed more. His skin looked wrinkled

and loose, as though the upper layers were sliding off the ones beneath.

"You're so dry," she said, and ran a finger over his ribs. The skin puckered, and a piece slid off. She jerked her hand away and stared, as it floated to the ground.

"I am, aren't I?" He rubbed an arm, making a shower of scales.

Tentatively, she touched the place where the skin had come off. "Does it hurt?"

"Uh-uh. Not at all."

She frowned. "Something's the matter, Roger. I think you should see a doctor."

"I feel all right."

"You're getting too much sun. You're acting weird."

"I like the sun."

"You're not used to it."

"It doesn't bother me." He stifled a yawn.

"Fine," she said. "Do it your way." She took a drink and stared at the water.

"C'mon, Jill, don't be like that."

She started to reply then stopped herself. She sighed. "I'm worried about you, Roger. That thing today at the beach frightened me."

"It's okay." He hugged her. "Promise."

"Really?"

"Really. I'm just a little tired."

"Maybe you'll feel better after we eat. Why don't you get dressed so we can go?"

In the room he put on a shirt and sandals, and they walked the short distance to the restaurant. For dinner they ordered fresh fish, rice, and tortillas. Jill ate with a vengeance, while Roger hardly touched his plate. He felt more like sleeping than eating and by the end of the meal stopped fighting the urge. His head drooped to the side and he closed his eyes.

Jill finished quickly, paid the bill, then shook him awake. It wasn't easy, but eventually she pulled him to his feet. Half-carrying, half-dragging him, she finally got him to the hotel.

It was early, and the children were still up. A boy at the desk handed her the key to the room. He smiled and twirled his finger in the air. Jill smiled back, assuming that it meant "drunk" or something like it, and shouldered Roger toward the stairs. Out of the corner of her eye she saw the old man draped heavily in the hammock. Next to him was the girl with the dark eyes. She was staring.

Jill bit her lip and turned away. Sucking in her breath, she heaved Roger toward the room.

WHEN SHE WOKE, THE ROOM WAS DARK, but not like night. Slits of light played through the wooden shutters that were flattened against the screens. They cut down some of the heat, less of the noise, but they were better than nothing.

She kicked off the single sheet and groped to the toilet. Afterwards, she crossed to the window and pushed down the lever. Light rushed in, too much of it. She slammed the shutter closed.

She rubbed her eyes and began to gather clothing. Next to her, Roger slept.

She dressed and quietly left the room. It was mid-morning, and the fishing boats had already gone. The tide was coming. Jill yawned and stretched. It was time for breakfast.

She found a restaurant close by and ordered eggs, bacon, toast, and coffee. She ate slowly, thinking about Roger. She resolved that if he wasn't any better she'd get him to a doctor. It lifted her spirits. She paid the bill and returned to the room.

When she opened the door, she saw that Roger was up. He was leaning against a wall, his back to her. His arms were outstretched, his hands flattened on the smooth surface. A grating sound, fingernails on stucco, splintered the air.

"What are you doing?"

His arms jerked in and out.

"Roger?"

"What?"

"What's going on?"

"Nothing."

"I can't hear you."

"Nothing's going on." His voice was coarse.

"Will you turn around, I can barely hear you."

His head tilted to the side. "Just a second."

She waited uneasily, watching. His jaw moved in and out and his palms rubbed the wall. Slowly, he turned, lowering his arms with an effort. The tip of his tongue darted out, licked his lip, flew back into his mouth. He smiled timidly.

"Morning."

"It's almost noon."

"No wonder I'm so hungry."

"What were you doing, Roger?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, why were you lying against the wall?"

"I don't know. Just playing around I guess. Seeing what it was like."

"What *what* was like?"

"I don't know." He shrugged. "It doesn't matter. No big deal."

"I don't like this, Roger. Something's wrong. I'm taking you to a doctor."

"It's just vacation, Jill."

"You're acting too weird." She stepped toward him and reached out. With a start she drew her hand back. When she touched him again, her fingertips were trembling.

"What's the matter?"

"Your skin ..."

"What? What Jill?"

"It's ... it's different."

"Yes."

"Cold. It's cold, Roger."

"Make it warm then." He came closer. "Please."

His nostrils flared, sending dry puffs of air to her cheeks. His tongue flicked out, touched her hair, her ear. She shivered and came against him. Clumsily, he began to undress her. His fingers were awkward, and she had to help. She pulled off her shirt, then kicked down her shorts.

They stood naked, facing each other. Roger made a sound deep in his throat. His breathing was fast. Jill lifted her arms and held them out. She drew him close. Mindless of the tiny claws on her back, the hollow breath, the skin that chafed, she pulled him to the bed.

She came once, quickly, riding the tongue that tickled between her legs. It

was a strange sensation, a pleasant one, like drifting over warm fields of wheat. The flush left her face but she carried the pleasure for some time after. Roger lay beside her, watching the small movements of her chest. The urgency had left him, and his face held a look of great calm. His eyes were placid; his mind, patient. He murmured to her, hoarsely, from his throat.

"I love you, Jill." She stirred, as if cooled by a breeze.

"Thank you for bringing me here ... Gently he lifted his arms.

"For helping me find peace ... Feather tongue soft, he touched her a last time.

"... rest."

He slid from her, off the bed to the floor. Two quick pulls, a swipe at the latch, and he was out the door. He crouched on the steps, head cocked. Suddenly, he jolted up the stairs, his powerful limbs thrusting him forward. He caught the edge of the roof and pulled himself up, then scurried to the center. Mid-day sun soaked him in heat, the promise of warmth forever.

A dragonfly flitted close to his face. His eyes jumped.

"Hungry," he thought. "Food."

The tongue whipped out, touched a wing, curled back. The buzzing stopped, the eyes stilled, the creature sat, eating.



TZ PREVIEW

B Y

JAMES VERNIERE

Willow

"Forget all you know or think you know. You will need only your intuition, your own deep feeling for what is right and good . . ."

WITH THIS INVOCATION, THE HIGH Aldwyn of the Nelwyns—a race of Hobbit-sized farmers living in the Utopian shelter of Nelwyn Valley—inspires his apprentice, Willow Ufgood, to go on a quest to fulfill an ancient prophecy.

Welcome to *Willow*, a George Lucas production directed by Ron Howard that promises to be the fantasy film event of the decade. Many—including George (*Star Wars*) Lucas—have tried, but few have succeeded in their endeavor to translate the quest fantasy to the big screen. But *Willow* looks like it might succeed where *The Dark Crystal*, *Legend*, and *Labyrinth* have failed.

What do we mean by "quest fantasy"? Specifically, it's the genre immortalized in the twentieth century by J.R.R. Tolkien, whose novels—*The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy—have inspired and mystified readers and artists all over the world. But beyond Tolkien, the traditions of the quest fantasy can be seen in the great myth cycles of cultures everywhere, from the ancient Celts, Greeks, and Norsemen to present-day Australian aborigines and American Indians.

George Lucas is clearly aware of this tradition. In a recent appearance in a documentary film about the late mythographer and literary critic Joseph Campbell, Lucas paid tribute to Campbell and to his theories. Lucas even attributed the birth of the *Star Wars* cycle specifically to what he'd learned from Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell's study of the mythic savior/warrior who appears and reappears in the myths and legends that are the touchstones of human consciousness, and culture.

Which means that *Willow* may be not only a kind of homage to Tolkien, but also a document to the analytical genius of Joseph Campbell. And in fact, *Willow* director Ron Howard, together with George Lucas, actually discussed the making of *Willow* with Campbell shortly before his death last year at the age of eighty-three.

Willow began to take shape in 1985 when George Lucas called Ron Howard and told him that he had an idea he wanted to discuss. "He had the beginning of the story of Wil-

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Tragedy strikes as the High Aldwyn (Billy Barty) sends young Willow Ufgood (Warwick Davis) on a quest to save their Nelwyn village (above, left).

For *Willow*, Director Ron Howard and Executive Producer George Lucas assembled the largest group of little people ever to appear in a feature film (above, right).

In her throne room, the evil queen Bavmorda (Jean Marsh) plots the destruction of the child Willow has pledged to save (right).

Bavmorda dispatches General Kael (Pat Roach), leader of the Nockmaar legions, to track down Willow and his companions (left).





Many of Moebius's original preproduction sketches provided the inspiration for the final look of the film; for example, his conception of the Daikini warrior Madmartigan, portrayed in the film by Val Kilmer (left); and General Kael's lethal "Death Dogs" (above, right). He also envisioned the elf-like Brownies of the enchanted land of Cherlindrea (far right), which have been realized on film through the technical wizardry of Lucas's Industrial Light and Magic.

DESIGNING WILLOW

FRANCE'S
VISIONARY ARTIST
MOEBIUS
CONTRIBUTES
TO WILLOW'S
MAGIC.

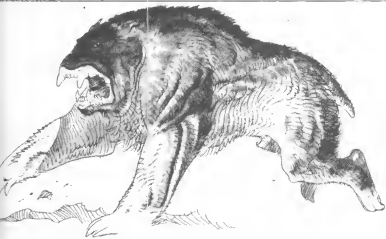


PHOTO © 1988 BY GREGORY PRESTON

IN A LETTER TO FRENCH GRAPHIC ARTIST JEAN "MOEBIUS" GIRAUD, Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini once said, "I live as if I am suspended weightlessly in one of your oblique universes." It's a sentiment many of us share. Giraud creates worlds that seem to be woven from the silken threads of our collective dreams, yet are completely and magically unique. In his acclaimed graphic stories such as *Arzach*, *The Airtight Garage* of Jerry Cornelius, *The Long Tomorrow*, and *The Black Incal*, Moebius creates worlds that are alternately primitive and futuristic, savage and refined, "pop" and *avant garde*, familiar and yet utterly "other," an appropriate accomplishment for a man whose pseudonym describes a working paradox.

For Giraud, the link between cinema and graphic art has always been vital. "When I was a boy, all the kids my age were attracted to the myth of the American West," says Giraud, who was born in 1938 in a suburb of Paris, but is speaking from his home in Santa Monica, California. "In a way, I lived in two places at the same time: A part of myself was in Colorado, the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains. It wasn't even American to me really. In those days all the films were dubbed. So for me, Gary Cooper will always speak French. In a way, I came here because the West is a part of me."

That Old West influence was evident when Giraud worked on *Lieutenant Blueberry*, a French comic strip-



homage to the American Western. And the cinematic influence was also evident when he and writer Dan O'Bannon created *The Long Tomorrow*, a futuristic tribute to Raymond Chandler and film noir that—among other things—was the pattern Ridley Scott drew upon when he created images for *Blade Runner*.

George Lucas was a Moebius fan long before he called upon the artist last year to contribute to the making of *Willow*. It was not Giraud's first encounter with production art. Moebius, along with Swiss surrealist H. R. Giger, was one of the guiding lights behind both the aborted Alejandro Jodorowsky production of *Dune* and Ridley Scott's marvelously realized sf shocker, *Alien*.

"Working with Jodorowsky on *Dune* was wonderful," says Giraud, "because I had contact with a great artist. It was not only a movie. It was a great adventure and a great friendship. Giger was a very nice man, and his work is incredible. But his inspiration is really sad. It shows some sickness, some pain. I'm worried for him."

Giraud's first contact with George Lucas was whimsical. "A few years ago," explains Giraud, "his secretary wrote to me and asked me to make an original drawing for his friends to give to him on his birthday." More recently, Lucas himself called upon Giraud to help design a *Star Wars*-related display for Disneyland. A few months later, he was brought in as a contributor to make sketches and paintings

of characters in *Willow*.

Moebius's sketches for *Willow*'s brash warrior-hero Madmartigan seem to combine elements from Hal Foster's classic *Prince Valiant* with those of medieval Japan and nineteenth century American Indian culture. "You know, it's all in my consciousness, in my thoughts," agrees Giraud. "I used to mix medieval, Indian, and science fiction all the time. But it's too much work to look for influences, really. I am influenced by other artists, but also by my mother, my father, music, books, philosophers, people on the street. In a way, artists are like children playing in the same schoolyard. We play with a ball, and we throw it to one another. We are happy playing together."

Currently at work putting together a multi-million-dollar animated film adaptation of *The Airtight Garage* of Jerry Cornelius for a 1990 release, Giraud has completed work on a French animated film, *Les Maitres de Temps*.

Since *Willow* has been described as a kind of tribute to J.R.R. Tolkien, it seemed appropriate to end our conversation by asking about the author's influence on Moebius's work. "Oh, yes. I was very impressed by Tolkien's books, which were only translated into French in the last ten years. *The Lord of the Rings* is a great book. It's really magic. You know, everything that speaks about magic and dreams..." he pauses, searching for a phrase in English—"befriends me."

—James Verniere

WILLOW

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 48



Ron Howard sees his role as making *Willow* not only a visually spectacular fantasy film, but a moving human drama as well.

low," says Howard. "It was something that he'd been wrestling around with for almost ten years, a kind of fantasy film based specifically on this kind of main character."

In a *New York Times* interview, Lucas himself described *Willow* as a "pure fantasy" film that came out of his psyche. "It's more mythological than other works I've done... a whole world that doesn't exist had to be created."

Willow is set in a magical world inhabited by humans, trolls, sorcerers, dragons, brownies, elves, and the child-like, prelapsarian race of little people called the Nelwyns. The landscape of this world—in keeping with the conventions of this genre—is a geographical reflection of the moral character of its inhabitants: the antagonists dwell among the blasted heaths and volcanic crags of the land called Nockmaar; the Nelwyn live in a peaceful, fertile valley; and the brownies flit about the pastoral, wooded Hills of Cherlindrea.

The film's hero is Willow Ufgood (Warwick Davis), a Nelwyn "chosen" to rescue a human child (the "big people" are called *Daikini* in the film) named Elora Danan, and to carry her to the Camelot-like kingdom of Tir Asleen. The journey is undertaken to fulfill a prophecy and thereby bring about the downfall of the Evil Sorceress, Bavmorda (Jean Marsh). Aiding the sweetly innocent, Hobbit-like Willow in his quest are Madmartigan (Val Kilmer), a wise-cracking, ever-resourceful Daikini warrior; and two brownies (characters created entirely by magic—that is, Lucas's Industrial Light and Magic). Willow's chief adversaries, besides Bavmorda, the Primal Priestess of Cults and Covens, are General Kael (Pat Roach), Bavmorda's villainous, skull-faced enforcer, and his blood-thirsty, indefatigable "Death Dogs."

"It's completely different from anything I've worked on," says Howard, who is, of course, best known as the director of *Splash* and *Cocoon*, two of the most successful fantasy films of the last ten years. "But I have four kids, and George knew I was interested in the genre." Lucas knew about Howard's interest because three years before the start of *Wil-*

low, Howard and Brian Grazer (Howard's partner in the production company, Imagine Films) went to Lucas with an idea for an "extreme" fantasy film that never panned out. "It was technically very difficult, and we were unable to solve that project. But I still had this gnawing desire to work with that style of picture and do it while my own kids were young."

So after their second meeting, Howard told Lucas he'd "think about" making *Willow*. But he called him back the very next day. "I said, 'I didn't have to think too long,'" explains Howard, who adds that *Willow* was "far and away the most difficult film" he's ever made. "But it also felt familiar to make," he explained, "because it's derived from the roots of story-telling itself."

Howard, a former child actor, was first introduced to fantasy films when his father took him to meet special-effects expert Tim Barr. "Fantasy literature didn't play a large part in my own childhood, but several fantasy films did," says Howard. "I liked the *Sinbad* films a lot, for instance. But Tim Barr was working on both George Pal's *The Time Machine* and *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm*. I knew the Grimm stories, of course. But when I saw them on the screen, it was like opening a door to me, in terms of what movies could do. Yes, I worked on *The Andy Griffith Show*. But that was really just people talking and the camera shooting it. I didn't ever think at all about movie magic, so I became really interested in those kinds of movies and saw all the Ray Harryhausen stuff. I hadn't been a huge buff, but from that point forward, I was a big fan."

Howard was introduced to the more serious aspect of myth and fantasy after he met Joseph Campbell, about thirty years later. "It was kind of by accident. He was just passing through after we had 'broken' the story. And Bob Dolman (the screenwriter) and George and I spent about two hours taking turns telling sections of it to him. Campbell was very polite and very supportive, and occasionally he would stop us and say, 'Gee, that's a wonderful variation on this ancient theme...' It made us feel very good."

On the subject of collaborating with George Lucas, Howard is quick to point out that the experience is probably different for each collaborator. "I thought it was great to have somebody around who'd done that kind of movie before, so I may have been more open to his presence than others have been. Basically, George thinks of himself as a conceptualizer, a writer and an idea man. It's his company and his story, so you're going to have to listen to his arguments. And even though he's accomplished about the stuff in between, if he really liked doing it, he'd be directing these movies himself. But he doesn't, and when it comes to the actors, he looks to the director to make the scene play."

In fact, Lucas was also working with Francis Coppola on the film *Tucker*—a saga about a legendary automobile manufacturer—at the time *Willow* was being shot. "So it's not like he was secretly co-directing or anything like that," says Howard. "But I would describe him as a very strong, hands-on producer. He won't be shut out of the process."

Is the film a tribute to Tolkien? "Well," says Howard, "I have not read *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings*. So I don't know. George said that comparisons would be made, especially since Willow's a little guy. From what I can gather, it's part of that same fantasy realm."

Howard isn't sure what the enduring appeal of the genre is, but he thinks it has something to do with the link between historical time and mythological time. "Kids find real history boring," he says. "But my daughter loves stories that take place in 'the olden times.' So I think that when you create a strange, old-looking world, kids are fascinated by it."

Theories aside, a film like *Willow* seems like such a massive undertaking, one wonders where the filmmakers begin in practical terms to realize the vision. "It's a huge undertaking, but it's not unlike making any other kind of movie. It just requires more support and it demands people who can stand up to constant challenge. We began with the production designer," explains Howard, referring to Allan Cameron, whose work in *Aliens*, 1984, *Highlander*, and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* bode well for *Willow*. According to Howard, a production designer like Cameron will then suggest a team of players to be brought in. "Yes, it builds from there. John Richardson, who won an Oscar for *Aliens*, for example, then became our floor effects man."

For inspiration, Howard and his designers spent four or five months in late '86 and early '87 poking around museums, looking through costume books and listening to a lot of old Celtic music ("which has an almost Japanese sound"). At the same time, he and Lucas had the ILM design team go to work creating costumes and creatures, and they also brought in "outside" artists to visualize the look of the film as well, in some cases just to modify existing designs. One of the "outsiders" brought in was the acclaimed French artist Jean "Moebius" Giraud. "It was a very exciting period to go through," says Howard. "We'd say, 'Oh, we need a dragon, something a little different,' and people would bring in drawings of two-headed dragons, four-headed dragons, dragons that looked like crocodiles, all kinds of things. And you sit around and discuss the merits of dragons. It was great fun."

One of Giraud's tasks was to make sketches of characters and armor. "He really led us to the look of Madmartigan," says Howard. "We took one of his drawings and just decided that that's what we wanted." For Howard, who wasn't familiar with contemporary fantasy illustration, working with artists like Moebius was an eye-opener. "It's fascinating to see how they've freed their imaginations and created entire worlds within their

own minds."

On a somewhat more sober note, even George Lucas has said that the fantasy quest genre "has seemed to be poison at the box office." What will make *Willow* succeed where others have failed? "I think that our movie is really emotional and character-driven. If you're one to give yourself over to fantasy at all, you'll find *Willow* a character you can identify with easily. The characters in *Willow* are not simply moving the plot. In fact, that was always supposed to be my contribution to the movie. It's easier said than done, of course. But I think the characters are interesting, funny to watch, and touching. The other difference is that we don't rely on the visual aspects of this movie for the entertainment value, at all. It's about people and adventure. Everything else is secondary," explains Howard, who has an option to "participate" in any sequels to the film. "I'd be open to it," he adds.

In light of some of the similarities in the plot and characterizations, *Willow* will almost certainly be compared to the *Star Wars* films. "It will be compared," says Howard. "And when you look at the storyline, some of the comparisons are kind of appropriate, really. I'm sure Madmartigan will be compared to Han Solo, for example, even though I think he's more of a type of 'Yojimbo'."

How important will the fans be to whether or not *Willow* succeeds? After all, it's opening on May 25, opposite *Rambo III*, a sure-fire blockbuster. "The fans are going to be crucial. It's honestly hard to say what the critical reaction will be," says Howard. "But I do think that the movie is going to speak to a certain group, and I hope that it lives up to their hopes and expectations."

In the end, hopes and expectations are what films like *Willow* are all about. Even the cynics, who wonder if the film will be the third trip-up in Lucas's *Labyrinth*, *Howard the Duck* two-step, would be well-advised to take the High Aldwin's advice: "Forget all you know or think you know..." ■

The fiery chemistry between the brash Madmartigan (Val Kilmer) and Queen Bavmorda's warrior daughter Sorsha (Joanne Whalley) is expected to appeal to older viewers.







Irving Cholnocky was once an aimless drifter, a footnote in the Book of Life. But now Irving has found his true mission—to search for God on the streets of the city, no matter where that search may lead. . . .

MEETING MR. SUBIAN

"HAVE YOU FOUND GOD?"

The woman stopped Irving Cholnocky on the sidewalk, just as he emerged from the State Employment Office. She

was tall and past her youth; she wore a gray suit and a gray hat, both trimmed with red, white, and blue ribbons. Her eyes glistened with religious fervor and her upper lip with drops of sweat.

"Found God? I can't even find a job," Irving might have said. That would have amused Ripley, later on, over a beer at Brophy's. But Irving didn't say that; partly because he was basically too kindhearted to hurt anyone's feelings, partly because of a New Yorker's wary reluctance to antagonize a possible fruitcake, but mostly because he didn't think of it. Instead he mumbled something noncommittal and tried to push past her. But she wouldn't let him go. He took a tract from her hand and then another; he smiled and nodded while she chattered and proselytized; he broke away at last with a mumbled goodbye and moved away at the pace which is slower than a run but faster than a middle-aged female religious.

Irving, feeling safer, slowed after a couple of blocks. He strode along the city street, automatically dodging pedestrians and baby strollers as he enjoyed the day and worked over the incident in his mind until it came out a victory for Irving. He thought of the line about the job and put it into the story, for he was preparing the story as an offering. Irving had never found God, but he had found Ripley.

A bit further on he passed a couple of Moonies smiling clean and vacant and

ROGER PARSON

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES STONEBRAKER

pointing the way. And yet again after he boarded the dust-cracked city bus he saw a group of Hare Krishnas on the sidewalk, jumping up and down, chanting, drumming; looking, in their saffron robes and face paint, as out of place on the gritty city street as a howdahed elephant in a K-Mart parking lot. Irving chuckled as he added these new elements to his recitation, leaving the bus and walking down the city street around the garbage cans and the open cellar entrances in the sidewalk. By the time he swung open the door at Brophy's his story was polished and ready.

Ripley Thompson was there, as always, in his frayed and stained black suit, at his as-always table with his as-always beer before him, warm and wise and fat, like a somewhat seedy Orson Welles. Ripley did not work, or study. Ripley rarely moved. Ripley *was*. He waved slightly at Irving, smiled his warm and generous smile, and Irving felt himself at peace.

There were no other of Ripley's friends and disciples there at the moment. The only other occupants of Brophy's were a couple of alcohol-bleached old men with their hands wrapped around an afternoon's worth of whiskey, and behind the bar Harry Brophy himself, regarding his best customers distantly with the stoic calm of a middle-aged saloon owner whose business has been on the edge of bankruptcy since Nixon's first term.

SUBIAN

Irving was glad that none of Ripley's other friends were in Brophy's that afternoon. Any friend of Ripley's was a friend of his, since they tended to have so much in common; particularly their reverence for Ripley and their lack of other interests, such as gainful employment. Still, Irving was jealous of Ripley's attentions to anyone else, and a moment alone with Ripley was golden.

Irving bought two beers from Brophy at the bar, one for each of them, carried them carefully to Ripley's table and sat down, told his story, did his number. He would have had stage fright had not Ripley put him at his ease with his warmth, his beneficence. Ripley chuckled at all the right places and Irving was fulfilled. And then the best part; Ripley began to talk.

"Found God? What an enchanting suggestion! The Lord of Hosts, the Creator of the universe, to be found on the streets of Gotham amid the thievery and the bitchery of this most pagan and most Mammon-worshipping of cities? Yes, well, why not? What reason to suppose He may not be found among us at any time? This is His world, after all, Irving, and even, therefore, presumably, under the layers of 'only in the simplest of metaphors Heaven sent' dust

and soot, His city; what place with a better right?"

"You mean He might be just walking around here, like that colored guy with the deep voice in *Green Pastures*?" asked Irving.

Ripley chuckled, warm, throaty, fulfilling. "Yes, more or less. God, the Creator, among us, His creations. Walking among us, unnoticed, unrecognized, in human form. Who is to say it might not be? It would certainly amuse Him, I should think; after all, why did He make us all, if not for His own amusement? He might well wish to walk among us, to peer closely at the least of us, warts and all."

Irving was struck by a sudden awed thought. "You aren't God, are you, Ripley?"

Ripley hesitated for only the briefest of moments; but he hesitated, he hesitated. And then he smiled again. "No, Irving, there are very few things in the world of which I am absolutely sure, but one of them is that I am not God. Trust me, Irving, I'd tell you if I were."

He patted Irving's arm, and Irving trusted him, loved him.

"No, your search for the Almighty as He lives will not be so easy for you as all that. You must walk the streets of our city and the ways of our world with a keen eye and an open mind. For if God is among us He stands ready to reveal Himself to those of us He finds worthy, does He not? Else what is the point? Or perhaps (and it would be a

magnificent irony, and therefore worthy of the God who made this, our world) He has no thought to reveal Himself, but yet He has deliberately left a flaw, a chink, an imperfection (or perhaps a perfection), so as to reveal Himself to the pure in heart. Or perhaps the impure."

A moment of reflection, Ripley smiling calmly up at the ceiling, Irving staring at him raptly, the old men at the bar quietly continuing their self-pickling, Brophy picking his nose. "No, I think purity is the keynote. Purity, Irving. And keen observation." Ripley smiled at Irving; they smiled together.

So Irving went out into the city to find God. It passed the time.

SOME MEN ARE BORN FOR THE ARENA. Irving Cholnucky was born for the bleachers. He was by nature an observer, an onlooker, and he passed his unemployed days much as he had before his quest began, in walking about, searching, observing, and from time to time reporting back to Ripley at Brophy's.

It was certainly less taxing, because more interesting (more interesting, because less taxing) than looking for love or for work. Even before his present quest Irving had been wont to pass many a long day in walking and in looking and in feeling the sweet flow of time over him. He visited museums on those days or evenings when admission was free, marveling at the beauty or ugliness of objects, studying information on labels, and feeling a bit brightened at the thought of the incomprehensible (to Irving) amounts of energy and dedication which had been required to create these objects, or to find them and bring them to the museum from the far times and places of the world.

On other days he strolled up and down the city's fabled avenues, observing the pedestrians and studying the shop windows, or walked through the big department stores. Irving viewed the goods for sale not in a spirit of covetousness, but as he viewed the displays in the museums; he marveled that such things should be, that some people existed who'd had the dedication to manufacture and market such articles, and he studied the shoppers for a clue as to what sort of people they might be, who would wish to clutter their lives with food processors and wrist calculators, and the like.

Or yet at other times Irving might stroll through the stacks at public libraries, enjoying the smell of dust and knowledge. Irving's style of research was to run his hand down a line of books until he came to a binding he liked, and then leaf through the book,

UPDATE

ROGER PARSON

In the two years since "In the Gray Place" ran in TZ (August 1986), writer Roger Parson has been keeping busy. As we noted in his biography last time out, Mr. Parson, a former corporate lawyer and author of this issue's "Meeting Mr. Subian," is a professional musician who divides his time between writing and playing the bagpipes. To clear up an error in our earlier biography: "In the Gray Place" was Mr. Parson's first work of fantastic fiction. His first published story was "The Man in the Chair that Moved by Itself," which ran in the March 1980 issue of *CO-ED* Magazine.

Born in Wisconsin, Mr. Parson has lived in New York for the last twenty years with his wife Rhea and their two children, Helen, three-and-a-half years old and fifteen-month-old Emily. While bagpiping is commanding more of his time right now, Mr. Parson promises more writing is on



the way and invites any readers who may pass him walking by on the streets of Manhattan to step up and say "Hi!"

PHOTO BY ALICE PARSON

noting chapter headings and picture captions. He preferred books with lots of pictures, on subjects such as head-hunting among the Jivaro Indians, or the design and construction of a Roman catapult. Theology had never been his long suit.

But now as Irving walked, and looked, and watched, it was with a singleness of purpose, vague and diffuse though it might be, such as he had never known before. He looked for God. He looked for the clue, the hint, the sign, whatever it might be, though he had no idea what it might be, having perhaps even less imagination than most men. He only hoped he'd know it when he saw it; hoped, but did not really believe.

And then in a Korean greengrocer's establishment near his home on the Upper West Side, amid the kimchee and the carrots, Irving first saw Mr. Subian.

Irving was that afternoon suffering one of his many (but mild) pangs of conscience, this one having to do with eating a more healthful diet than his usual beer, hamburgers, and salted things in cellophane bags. As he sorted aimlessly through a pile of eggplant, perhaps looking for one that came with instructions, he started as a thin, brown hand landed for the smallest moment on his, and then was jerked away like a spider on a string. Looking up he saw moving away a slim dark man of medium height and ... no age at all.

It was that which caught Irving's attention (an easy thing) and held it (not so easy). Irving's first impression was of a man of about fifty-five, but his second was of a man of eighty, and his third of a man of thirty.

Irving watched as the man moved catlike about the dimly lit shop, watched in fascination and a rising excitement as he tried to determine just what it was about the man that impressed him so oddly. The man intently studied produce, slowly fingering the tropical fruits with an intensity and longing out of all proportion to their beauty or vitamin content. At last he made his choices, paid, and left the shop with his brown paper bag, and Irving, following like a puppy on a leash.

The man walked quickly and quietly, up Broadway, up a street, up an avenue. Irving followed with great care and caution, of no matter since the other man never turned around. Quickly through the summer dusk, the broken sidewalk glass, the stopball games, to an old tenement building, up the steps and in the door. Irving could not follow (no key) but in the foyer noted the name on the mailbox the man had

checked (briefly, absently, no mail). The name was Subian.

"YOU THINK YOU MAY HAVE FOUND HIM, then, Irving?" Ripley seemed to be amused. "Subian, you say. A Mr. Subian, so-called. The name sounds as though it might be Armenian."

"Yeah, that's what I thought," said Irving, for all the world as though he knew what an Armenian was. Mr. Subian was in fact Egyptian, but of course neither Irving nor Ripley had any way of knowing that.

"What leads you to think, Irving, that your neighbor Mr. Subian might be no less than God made manifest?



What deity-like propensities have you observed him to exhibit?"

Irving had the uneasy feeling that Ripley might be mocking him, but if so his manner, as always, was so gentle and gentlemanly that Irving would have been unable to take offense even had he been sure. And at least he had Ripley's attention.

"Well, I don't know, there's nothing I can really put my finger on. There's just something very strange, like weird, about him. It's like, he looks healthy, he walks fast enough, but sometimes I look at him, it's like looking at something a thousand years old. He looks so old and dried-out, like you could see right through him."

Ripley drained his current beer, put it down on the water-streaked table, and belched slightly, graciously, covering his mouth with two fingers. "And are you, Irving, the one to see through God? To see through His subtleties and subterfuges, to discover His true meaning? And what will you do if you discover you're right?"

The question startled Irving. He had not thought that far ahead. Indeed he had pursued the game for its own

sake, with, for Irving, intense singleness of purpose. But Irving was not a man to consider consequences.

"Well, I don't know. I guess if I knew Mr. Subian was God, I'd ask him ... I'd ask him for ... something."

Ripley studied Irving for a long moment, while Irving felt uncomfortably as though he had failed a test. And then Ripley smiled again, characteristically gentle, uncharacteristically enigmatic. "Yes, Irving," he said softly, and rather sadly, "you can ask him. And you can ask him for me, too."

So Irving returned once again to the hunt, charged now with a mission. He pursued Mr. Subian, sought him, waited for him outside the old tenement and followed him on his long and seemingly aimless walks about the city. He sat in restaurants and movie theaters and watched Mr. Subian at his solitary pleasures. He followed Mr. Subian again to the Korean grocer's, and noted which apples and tomatoes his agile brown hands touched, and came closer to study the fruit after Mr. Subian had gone, looking for some sign of divinity. He even tried once to open the mailbox in the tenement foyer, with the name Subian in neat letters (and some small part of his mind wondered why, if he was to commit a Federal felony, it could not be one with more potential profit).

Irving could not be said to be hounding Mr. Subian, but only because the other man was totally oblivious to his presence. And as Irving pursued his goal he tried not to notice the still, small voice of reason in his mind that said, "Hey, he's just an old guy down on his luck."

Perhaps the attraction was in the obsession itself; Irving reveled inwardly in his monomania as he sat stirring a cup of terrible coffee in a Broadway coffee shop, watching his quarry in the mirror as Mr. Subian sat alone eating a dinner of fried veal cutlet. Irving was a man of few enthusiasms and a short attention span, and had pursued nothing in his life as he now pursued the elusive fantasy and the concrete fact of Mr. Subian.

And at last one rainy autumn night Irving followed Mr. Subian home once again to the familiar tenement, watched as usual as Mr. Subian went inside, once again taking no notice of Irving's presence. Irving walked idly past the building and stood on the cracked sidewalk in front of the weed-choked, trash-strewn vacant lot next door. Stared up at the side of Mr. Subian's building and noted as a light went on on the third floor; Mr. Subian's room (a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 81

OMNISCIENT MITCH

& THE
MILLION-DOLLAR
PAIN & GAIN
MACHINE

KEVIN COOK

You can talk about your *Wheel of Fortune*, your *Hollywood Squares*, & your *100-Thousand-Dollar Pyramid*. But, for the smartest guy in the whole of Chicago, there's only one game worth playin' . . .

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN BREakey

MITCH MASON WAS THE smartest guy I ever met. Not like a smartass type. Just intelligent, like Roger Staubach or somebody. You wouldn'ta known it by lookin' at him, though. Mitch was a big lumberjack-lookin' guy. Big red beard, big belly, big muscles poppin' out his tee-shirt sleeves. Sometimes I used to call him Omniscent Mitch. The *Readers' Digest* said that was somebody who knows just about all there is to know. That was Mitch. So I called him that for awhile, till he told me to cut it out.

He lived with his waitress-wife about 3 blocks from Wrigley Field. Me & the other guys from the plant—Eddie Gogolak, Danny Geiselman & Espinosa—we'd go over there Tuesday nights & play quarter-ante till we'd drunk all the beer. Mitch was our foreman at work, which is why we played at his house. He was always kinda in charge of us. Last time we all played together seems like a long time ago, but it was only last winter.

"Espinosa, get me a brew," I was hollerin', sittin' there & lookin' at 3 jacks. Espinosa was the only minorities guy in our group. We just called him by his last name since "Fulgencio" sounded so weird.

"Up yours, bandido," he says. "Get

the beers yourself. Have Treesh get the beers."

Trish was Mitch's formerly good-lookin' but now kinda soft & raggedly waitress-wife. She was watchin' a game show on TV, over in the corner by the window. The show with the big pinball game. She had the sound turned up high, so she could still hear the questions when the El went by.

Mitch was winnin' a little that night, like usual. On top of playin' poker, he was busy in his mind figurin' out the over-under lines for the NFL games on Sunday. BEARS AT SEATTLE—OVER 38, he writes on a paper napkin. In between raises & antes & over-unders, he'd answer the questions from the game show too.

"See & raise a quarter," he says. "Cesar Romero."

"What?" goes Eddie, foldin'.

"Cesar Romero. He played the Joker on the old *Batman* TV show."

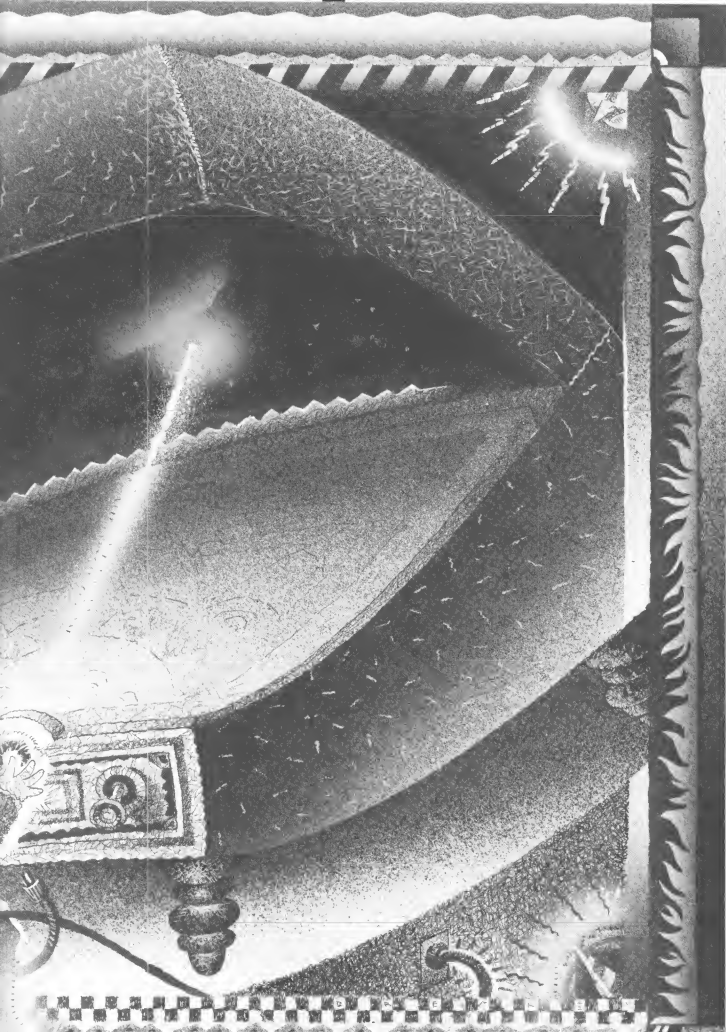
"Just play poker, man. I gotta get even here before spring trainin' starts."

Espinosa giggles in his Bud.

"What for, man? You gotta go to Arizona, show Lee Smith how to throw a fastball?"

Eddie didn't think that was too hilarious. "Man, man," he says. "I gotta beat you around the ears with a canned ham. Then we can call you Spic-n-Span."





MITCH

Ha, ha."

"Yeah? Oh, yeah?" Espinosa's spitting out some little beer bubbles. "You be careful, gringo. One day this spic cut you up bad."

"Oh, my!" Eddie says, actin scared. "I better run. He's too bad for me, right Mitch? *Andelay! Andelay!*"

I could see Mitch was gettin tired of all this fuckin around. I figured he'd raise me & my jacks, but you could never tell too much from watchin his face.

"Cut the shit, men," he says. "Eddie, you & Espinosa better make up, so's I don't put the both of you behind a wheelbarrow tomorrow."

Eddie says, "He knows I don't mean nothin by it."

"Then tell him that."

"Okay, okay. Forget it, Espinosa, alright?"

Espinosa says, "Sure, man. Cut you later, man." Everybody laughs at that one.

"Now, Janet," comes the MC voice on the TV, "for 50 points, name the capital of Ecuador!"

Janet on the TV show hems & haws & says "Rio Acapulco." A big whoopee buzzer goes off, makin her out to have scrap iron for brains. I call & show Mitch my jacks.

"Damn," he says. He shows eights over fours, rakes in 7-8 dollars. "She shoulda said Quito."

We ante up & Danny says for the millionth time if Mitch wasn't such a lazy bastard he'd go on those shows & win big bucks, cars, & fantasy vacations for two. He could buy a big Bud-

weiser truck & give free beer to all the poor thirsty people, like especially us.

"Trish, you got some smokes?" Mitch says like he didn't even hear. She goes in the kitchen & throws him her Marlboros. But they're the 100's kind, Mitch tears off about 20 millimeters so he can have a regular smoke. Then he leans back & blows a smoke ring, lookin at the TV set.

"Seems to me I could beat the people they got on there now," he says.

"Do it, man," says Espinosa. "You beat them all. You the smartest guy north of the Board of Trade."

"Smartest guy in the whole damn town," Danny goes. "In the plant, for

Danny says that if Mitch wasn't such a lazy bastard, he'd go on one of those game shows & win big bucks, fancy cars, and fantasy vacations for two.

sure."

That's about enough for Trish. She's been poppin beer cans for 2 hours. She smacks some more cans on the table & really bangs down the one in front of Mitch. Some beer comes out & sloshes on his "over-under" napkin.

"If you were so smart like these guys are always tellin you," she says, "you wouldn't be playin poker for dimes & missin the gas bill every month." Then she sits back down by the TV & turns it up some more.

"You're just mad," I tell her. "I bet you thought it was Rio Acapulco too."

"Was I talkin to you, Phil," she says, "or did you just get named the Henry Kissinger of South Water Tool & Die?"

Mitch says for her to just sit there & watch the show, after she gets us some more beers.

Fisskk, fisskk, fisskk go 3 more pop-tops. She slams them down & looks straight at Mitch. The other guys & me make sure we're lookin at our cards.

"If you were so smart," she says, "maybe your little boy wouldn't be wearin gym shoes to school in the winter. Maybe you ought to go be on the

shows—that's the only thing you're good at."

"They're in California!" Mitch hollers. "How am I supposed to get to California? You got a plane in that drawer with your Marshall Field panties?"

When Trish got mad her face would squeeze up & turn all red. It looked like that now. "You can write!" she yells. They put their address on at the end of all the shows. You could drive out there & be on a whole bunch of them at one time!"

"You can only be on one," Mitch says to her. "They won't let you be on a whole bunch of them. It's a regulation." Then he takes off his Cubs cap & puts it on the table. I can't tell what he's thinkin, but he's smilin a little, lookin over at Trish. He says, "But I could be on one, I guess. I never been to California. What do you think, Phil?"

"Don't know much about California," I tell him. "But I heard a lot of good things about it. Sun shinin all the time, & pretty girls lyin around pools, & all those wild parties the rich guys have."

"Think that's the the way it really is?" he asks.

"Well, I'd be willin to go find out," I say & he laughs. "If you won big bucks, maybe we could get into one of those parties."

"You never know," he says. He's still smilin.

Trish says, "You better keep your hands off the pretty girls."

"Phil'd protect me," Mitch says. "Wouldn't you, Phil?"

"I'd just keep the pretty girls to myself," I say.

Everybody laughs. We're all pretty fired up, since we figure if Mitch really got on one of those shows he'd win for sure. We play a couple more hands & then Mitch puts the cards & the chips back in his plastic poker-chip thing. Like I said, that was the last time we all played poker with Mitch.

WELL, WE DROVE OUT WEST A COUPLE weeks later. Espinosa got to be foreman for 2 weeks. Eddie didn't think too much of that, but he said at least Espinosa's hair could keep the machines greased & oiled. We loaded a grocery sack & 10 six-packs in the back of Mitch's Olds. He kissed Trish & little Mitch for a long time. I didn't have anybody to kiss, so we just headed on out. Drove straight through. I got to see a little bit of St. Louis & Oklahoma City & Amarillo, Texas. Then we got west of anyplace I'd ever been. Albuquerque, New Mexico, & then on through the top of Arizona. There was snow in Arizona. That was a surprise. They had big red

UPDATE KEVIN COOK

We published Kevin Cook's first story, "Return of the Screw," back in March of 1983 (the same issue, coincidentally, that we first published Barbara Owens, author of *Sliding*). At that time, Cook was the youngest editor ever to work at *Playboy* magazine. "Since then," reports Cook, "I've come to live the life of a freelancer in sunny Orange, California, where you can play golf all year round. I do most of my writing for *Playboy* and *Sports Illustrated*, and I've recently gotten my handicap down to ten."

Cook cautions grammarians reading "Omniscient Mitch" not to write us about the numerals, ampersands, and dropped "g's" in the story. "I wrote it that way on purpose."

hills all over the place, with flat tops. Mitch said they were "buttes." A real Indian filled up the tank at this one place in Arizona. His kids were all runnin around, kickin a taped-up softball along the ground. Musta been 10 kids or more.

We got into California & went on for about 3 hours. Then there was a bunch of lights & I thought we were in LA. But it was only San Bernardino, California. Took another couple of hours, but we finally got all the way to the Ocean. It was about 11 at night by then.

We parked in a lot that said SANTA MONICA BEACH & walked right out till the water was up over our shoes. The water was cold. It was weird to think that on the other side of it was Japan. I woulda guessed Russia or China, but Mitch said it was Japan. And if you could swim straight over, Hawaii would be on your left. He said maybe if we won a whole lot of money we could just fly there & lie on the beach. I said I liked it fine on this beach. The lights lit it up all the way up the coast, around a rocky crag & up towards San Francisco. We heard some boats honkin, but couldn't see them. Mitch said it was gettin late, so we went lookin for a motel.

We stayed right there in Santa Monica, by a big pier they have where you can play video games right by the Ocean. Most of the time I stayed in our room in the Surf Lodge or played video games on the pier while Mitch tried out for shows. A couple times I got to sit in the studio & watch him try out. Mitch did pretty good, but most of the games had a luck part & his luck was runnin bad. He got the questions right, but then somebody would luck out & beat him.

SO WE'VE BEEN THERE ABOUT A WEEK & we're sittin around the motel one night. Mitch is smokin on the bed & chompin down some Oreos from the machine in the lobby. He asks me how we're doin, since I'm his right-hand man & I got it all written down in a loose-leaf pad I always keep with me.

"Doin good," I say "If that broad hadn't of had that extra-tun ticket, you woulda beat her & get on *Wheel of Fortune*."

"Can't help that," Mitch says, poppin a Coors beer, his new favorite. "But how are we doin in the money department?"

"Well, we got \$275 left, Mitch."

"Jesus," he says. "I thought we were doin better than that." He slugs the mattress & little Oreo chips start flyin up off his lap. "I'm losin 11 hundred just takin two weeks off work."

"Me too," I say. "Well, almost." He was just sittin there on the bed,

watchin the TV picture flip. There was no vertical-hold button, so you couldn't fix it. Mitch chugs the rest of his Coors & shakes his head & the beer foam drips off his beard.

"I wish that pinball game'd call me," he says.

"Damn right," I say. "They got the biggest payoff there is, don't they? A million bucks! And you're the best pinball player around, next to me."

"I might not win the million. Nobody's done that yet, & you're the one with delusions of grandeur."

"With what?"
He's got a big grin now, & another beer in his hand. "Delusions of gran-



deur," he says. "I've been a better pinball player than you for two years."

"Like hell. I taught you everything you know."

"Maybe so, but now I've surpassed you." He sticks out his arm like one of those swordfighters with the wire masks. "Now I am the master & you are the student."

"You, pal," I say, "are full of it. I could take you 2 out of 3 right now. There's a bowling alley down the street. Come on. Loser buys the beers."

"I'm too drunk already, man."
"Well, I guess it's like they say. It takes steel balls to play pinball."

He gets up, steppin on my foot. "Let's go, sucker," he says.

So we go down to the place & he beats me 5 in a row. But it turns out to be okay, a good warmup for Mitch. Because about 9 o'clock that night the phone rings for the first time in a couple of days. I grab it & say hello, & here comes a velvety smooth voice from the other end.

"Mister Mason? Mitchell Mason?"

"No, ma'am, he's right here. I'll get him."

Mitch talks to the pretty voice for

about as long as it takes me to make a trip to the john. When I come out he's standin by the phone, tappin his foot on the floor, grinnin ear to ear.

"I'm on," he says.
"On what?"

"The Million Dollar Pain & Gain Machine. The one we watch at home. The guy they picked got cracked up in a car wreck & I was the first alternate. They think I'm appealingly ordinary."

"Right on!" I yell. We slap 5 like we just got in the Super Bowl. "When?"

"Tomorrow," he says. "So we don't have much time. We better go find a liquor store."

That's what we did. We got some Early Times in the place down by the Ocean & just sat there on the beach drinkin it. Mitch gets to feelin boisterous & starts yellin "No pain, no gain!" I holler "Cesar Romero! And Rio de Romero! Prince Albert in a can!" Mitch grins & says, "Or the Duke of Earl!" He's pokin me & spillin my styrofoam cup of Early Times, but I just laugh & pretty soon we're singin the old tune. "Dooook, Dooook, Dooook, Duke of Earl, Dook, Dook..." Seagulls are whizzin around our heads, walkin around eatin our Fritos off the sand, & they float straight up in the air when we scare them too much with our singing, & we just sit there all night waitin for the sun to come up on the Ocean. But the sun comes up back over our heads, because we forgot this is the West Coast, so then we sorta carry each other back to the motel & leave 5 dollars worth of Fritos on the beach for the birds.

NEXT DAY WE JUST GOOF AROUND. TAKE a bus up to Hollywood so we can check out the stars on the sidewalk with everybody's name on them. There's even one for Rin Tin Tin. It's right in front of AAA Adult Books & Novelties. Think of that. Guys with dirty hair & rubber coats zippin in there for peep-shows & dirty magazines, then walkin out right over Rin Tin Tin's star. I said I bet old Walt Disney's spinnin in his grave about that. Mitch says Disney didn't have anything to do with Rin Tin Tin & he's not in a grave anyway. They froze him. Think of that, too. Gonna thaw him out when the world gets better. I tell Mitch he's a regular fountain of information. I think they should wait till there's no more dirty bookstore hangin over Rin Tin Tin's star before they thaw out Walt.

We get to the studio place about 5 in the afternoon. The show starts at 6. It's a live show, Mitch tells me, which is pretty unusual in this day & age. When we show

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IN THE BELLY OF THE DEATH MOTHER

As a young man he had walked with the
night walkers, danced under strange
suns, called the spirits by their
true names. He feared nothing—
but the power of the heart . . .

CRAIG KEE STRETE

ILLUSTRATION BY JOEL JOHNSON

T

HE SUN BURNED IN THE RESERVATION sky like a fever-dream animal. The old woman stood outside the house and looked out over the dead land, staring at nothing. There was no feeling in her, no pain or hope or even a sense of loss.

That morning she had seen how things were in the darkened room and she was not sorry. Even now, as she waited for him to die, to sing his death song, the shadows that had walked through all her days made her still and quiet within herself.

A hawk wheeled above her, screaming in the sky.

She stared up at it, seeing its wings slashing across the blue sky like angry knives.

From inside the building, that crumbling stone and brick ruin that had contained the larger part of their life together and now held their end, all was quiet. Almost too quiet.

She strained to hear, listening for something to come for her. She heard only bird noises and the sound of insects at first and then, faintly, the murmur of a voice. His voice. Chanting perhaps. Speaking once again to the ancestors, telling them he was ready to journey among them.

She would have been content to wait outside until it was over. Maybe the old man wanted it

that way. It was hard to tell. They did not talk to each other much. The hurts of the past had grown like a stone canyon between them.

The sun beat down mercilessly on her head and back but she was used to it. The sound inside changed.

Now it sounded like the old man was crying. It was not what she would have expected.

She opened the badly hung door and stared into the gloom. She saw his crooked back, broke saddled with his old age, distorted in the ugly shadow.

There was a strangeness in the room, in the air itself as if something had leapt out of a grave and passed through the old stone and brick walls of the house. She shuddered. It was cold in here, impossibly cold for a day as hot as this.

There was a smell in here, an alien scent, not death, for that smell was all too familiar on the reservation, but of something else. Perhaps the life's breath of some night walker.

What had happened in here, she could not know. Nor did she care to know. The old man had his shaman's secrets and she never trespassed on them, for they were evil secrets.

"What's wrong?" she asked. "Why do you cry?"



DEATH

"I cry because I touched the faces of the dead. I felt their cold lips brush against mine," said the old man. He said it but it was not true, not completely true. He could not cry. He had seen too much in and out of life for tears. But he could never tell her this. His fear, always about her, about all the men and women he knew, was that too much of his real self would someday show and they would think him no longer human.

"You should take the medicine," said the old woman, staring at the untouched bowl at his feet.

"I'll take it when my bones are two days dead and piercing mother earth, seeking cool water."

"It is late in the day and you are tired," she said.

"It is early in the morning and I, just born, shall go dancing in a warm grave in the belly of the death mother." The old man bared his yellow teeth in a cruel smile.

"I think not," she said and recalled something that was long past. Everything was old and dying and long past in her world.

"The sun reaches across the sky burning the day left to me," said the old man. "I have seen the last of it. I shall see it walk the sky no more. I've had a vision and the land of dark beckons me, old woman."

He lifted his hand and stared at it. "I can see the bones showing through." He seemed suddenly pleased by that. There was a strange, terrible smile on his face.

She felt her face growing cold, her own heart going distant like a star in an unfriendly sky. He was a stranger to her, as he had always been and would be. She felt nothing for him, only small sorrow for herself. Her life had been empty, with no blood on her knife and no children to crawl across the cold years with their welcome gift of sudden and lasting warmth.

He had taken her youth from her, stripped it from her long ago and the memory of it did not sleep easily, if it slept at all.

"You are too eager for death, old man."

"I welcome the growing cold, the cool hiss of it. Yes. I desire it greatly."

"You wish to be rid of me, rid of

this life."

"Yes." The old man admitted it, not knowing if the words hurt and not caring.

Years gone by, the words would have stung like hail on bare skin, but she was past all that.

"You are a ghost, a shadow even now, old man, but you have long been dead with the wanting of it." The old woman stared at the room, seeing the great emptiness. "We should have had children. We could have chosen life over your magics, your strange journeys into—"

"Be still! I have no regrets! I have lived as I willed it," said the old man, turning his one good eye away from

He was a man with many dark secrets, but the darkest, most unspeakable secret of all was an old love for her, buried in the grave of yesterday.

her. "Now is not the time to change the path, old woman. That time is past. You could have had a different life but you walked my road so let that be an end to moaning about it."

"Why have you always pursued me with your coldness, given deadening chase to the heart of me? Why always to me, I who have wished only to live with you and love you?"

"Power was more to me than you. Power I could not always have. But you I always had."

"You were born with the dead. You are a grave shadow but yet with my old heart in your hand, I, now old and gray and used, I am the loving one you murdered."

He turned his one good eye toward her and was shocked by what he saw. The bird of death, long and black and eyeless, hovered above her and sand seemed to pour from the empty sockets of her hair-covered skull.

The illusion passed but not the reason for it.

"You!" said the old man. He shook his head at the wonder of it. "As I die, so do you! I, who see many things no one else can see, did not know it."

"I felt the little knife of death in my chest this morning and knew the sun would not see me again," she said.

The old man seemed to shrink back inside himself. This was not something he had counted on. New thoughts, unwanted, sprang to his mind. Feelings he hated within himself arose and overcame him.

Suddenly he regretted everything he had ever done to her. For a moment he wanted to ask her forgiveness. There would be a rightness to that act but his heart walked on the ground. His whole life was based on mastery, over her, over the world of shadows and men. If she saw the tender heart, his true sorrow, she would gain mastery over him and that he could never allow. He was a man with many dark secrets, but the darkest, most unspeakable secret of all, was an old love for her, a love unspoken and buried like a war pipe in the grave of yesterday.

As he thought of her, a thousand thousand cruelties assaulted him, each memory like another bitter, dry branch on his funeral pyre.

Not forgiveness, no, that was not in him for the asking, but sorrow, that at least he could admit to.

"Yes, old woman," he said, shutting his good eye, the words coming slowly and painfully. "I've treated you badly."

"It doesn't matter," she said and he knew she did not mean it.

He thought of all the women he'd had, the boasts he had made to her about it, reveling in his own proud, male blindness. Most of the stories had been lies. But she had believed him and been hurt, again and again. When the power eluded him, when the tantalizing magics danced just beyond his grasp, then and only then did he find solace in his women. But even then, he talked more conquests than he had made. That was his way. Lie or truth, the hurt was the same.

"You know all my old evils and cruelties. And there were many of them."

"Don't talk about them," she said.

"I had my women and..."

"Yes," she said. "There were women to share the warmth you could not give me. But why talk of it? That warmth has long since cooled, the fires are dead, and the arms that held you do not have you as I now have you."

"I traveled in distant worlds. It was something you could not understand. I walked with the night walkers, danced under strange suns, tasted strange burning water from hidden rivers no man ever saw. I could not take you with me. That at least you understood. You

Craig Kee Strete last appeared in TZ with "As if Bloodied on a Hunt Before Sleep" (August '87). His latest novel, Death in the Spirit House, will be published by Doubleday/Foundation in July.

stayed in your own world and you were safe there. You were just a woman who had never traveled."

"And so you needed the taste and touch of strange women who would understand your strangeness in ways that I could not. I have heard the tale often, but does it ever excuse the old hurts?" she said, but there was no tone of accusation in her voice, only acceptance.

"Yes," said the old man. "Strange and beautiful women who ran with me to the far places, women without human names, and I found solace and what little comfort I could from the spirit storm I walked in. So it was."

The old woman folded her hands in her lap. "You knew a pretty woman when you saw one. There was one called Nihali. You talked of her often. You loved this one much."

The old man's eyes clouded with memory. "Yes, that one. It was in the heat of a now dead summer. She was a night child, half woman, half darkness. I burned in terrible fire for that one. But she is gone as they are all gone and I am here with you. So it is."

The old woman bowed her head.

"I still remember the hurt, old man."

His eyes flashed with anger, anger more at himself than at her. "You cried that season more than ever. You waited up for me late in the night. Your heart smiled when I came back to you, but your eyes said something else. I always knew the feelings that lived in your eyes. They were truer than the heart which is often a great pretender."

"I tried to understand," she said, not looking at him.

"But failed, as you must, being only a simple living woman of one world. For what did you know of my great medicine? I was a Great Spirit Being and drank of things that other men could not taste."

"There was a time when I wanted to scratch their eyes out or drown myself in the river," she said. "That feeling is as dead as my youth. I told myself that what you did was nothing bad-hearted. That all men did it. It was a lie because few men love night spirits, but it comforted me, that old lie. In time, old man, I think I even forgot it was a lie."

The old man felt the bones of his chest. "My time comes soon, old woman. I dwell in sorrowful ways upon the old hurts, but I was what I am and will always be."

"This is not the time to ask forgiveness, nor can you speak for that because it is not your way. It is all long forgotten. You were good to me in your fashion and we had a life together. Out

of strangeness we wove it and nothing else matters," she said.

"It is not for you to forgive me anyway," he answered. "I must forgive myself if that is what must be. Only I know what I have done. I have lain with the dark and terrible ones." There was still much boasting in his speech for the old habit died hard. "The scars of that must survive in me always." Something passed like a shadow across his face and for an instant he looked haunted, tormented by all the old treacheries. His eyes were dark and uncertain.

And then it happened. The old woman saw into his power and to the distance beyond it, to the end and the overcom-



ing of him, once and for all time. She had never felt revenge in the snake of her old woman's heart but now it leaped with fangs from her breast.

"You know me and you do not know me. I had my guilty secrets, too," she said proudly, the lie coming uneasily to her tongue. A lie was new to her, alien to her being.

The old man smiled, not believing her. He felt pain in his chest but the thought that she could possibly have had a secret sin still made him smile.

"Keep your secret, old woman. You might scare me with it and the shock would kill me." He almost laughed at that. His mockery reached her not at all.

"I must tell you about it. I don't want you to feel so guilty, thinking you are the only one who has gone down strange roads. It will ease your heart to hear it. I never had the courage to tell you before."

He was contemptuous. "Nayee! You never had the courage to—"

But she interrupted him. "I slept with a bonepicker. With the night guardian who dances the bone dance in the sacred burying grounds of our people."

"You didn't do it." He waved his hands, as though shaking something away and his voice was broken like a traveling wind.

"But I did." The old woman held on to the lie, sensing its power. "A long, long time ago. And why shouldn't I? Is the world of spirits for men only? A woman can live at night as well as a man."

"No! No! It cannot be!" said the old man.

"It was a night when you were with some other woman—witch, or human kind, I did not know or care—and I was alone. It was a time of season-change when the whole world is restless. Not like now, not like the burnt ashes of unchanging summer. It was night and the stars seemed to fall in my hair and the windows were open to the wind and sky and he who waited for me ..."

"When?" raged the old man, not believing but yet ... "When?"

"It seems like only a few nights ago. Like last night and every night. I heard the birds dancing night love in the trees. I saw people passing on the distant road and every voice and sound, birds and unknown travelers seemed to whisper, 'Why are you alone?'"

"You lie," insisted the old man.

"I felt that if I stayed a moment longer by myself that my heart would tear itself out of my breast. I put on my best dress, the one trimmed with porcupine quill and elk teeth. I wore my white buckskin leggings. Yes, and I went into the night and sought him out."

"No one would touch you!" screamed the old man. "Who would dare my wrath, my great killing powers!"

"Yes." And now she had to smile at her own cleverness. "Your power was great and all men feared you. All living men. But the dead fear nothing."

"Who? Who was it?" he demanded to know.

"The night walker. The nameless one," she said. "He was young and old and ugly and handsome. He was all things and nothing. And he was strong and quick in the dark and he waited for me."

"Lies!"

"He undressed me beneath the burial rack of my father's father. His hands were like ice on a frozen man's dead face but they burned me just the same." The old woman untied her long braid, slowly unknitting the one long clump of gray hair. Carefully, like a young girl who flirted, she did not look at him.

"He never spoke but he caught hold of me in the dark and in his strange embrace, I forgot you."

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ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Meet Ragnar Fiona Flynn; a young working mother struggling, like thousands of others, to make it in the city. But unlike all the others, Ragnar is a witch—and her chosen profession has more than its share of occupational hazards. . . .

MICHAEL GALLOGLACH

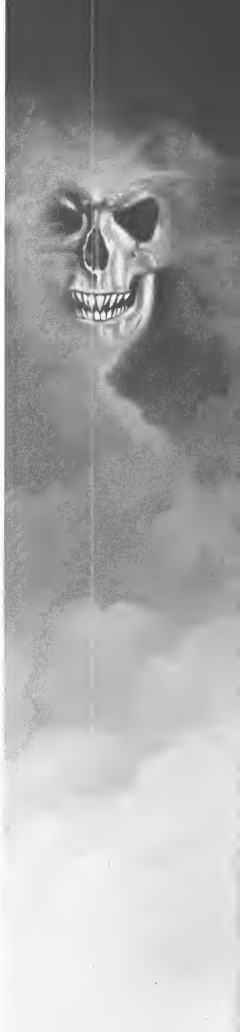
PAINTING BY JOHN MONTELEONE

RAGNAR STOPPED AT THE LITTLE BODEGA ON THE CORNER. PACO WAS always nice to her. She'd rid his store of mice and rats, and once a month she came in and killed the cockroaches. She did it for fifty-five dollars, and she was entirely safe, no nasty chemicals.

Ragnar Fiona Flynn made her living by the sale of herbs and by the performance of small magics. There had never really been any question what else she would do. You didn't choose the work; the work chose you. When she was a child in Marra, Ireland, she had imagined herself as a worker of large magics; conjurations of kelpies and fabulous animals, the mistress of storms, a sorceress among the dunes and standing stones calling up the awful spirits of the dead kings of the Celts. A good Catholic girl, she would raise the ghost of Cuchulain, the greatest of the Celtic warriors, and together they would drive out the English altogether, although the English were out of all but Northern Ireland anyway.

Instead, like so many Irish, she had emigrated, ending up in New York. She had set out to study but along the way had married, had a son, separated, attended to her responsibilities.

Clients asked her for great magics; she always refused. Once in a while,





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when the power was flowing through her, she would feel the temptation. But she lacked training, and was unwilling to take unnecessary risks—not for herself, but for Ian.

Now she did the little works of magic—not that New York needed someone to take the curse off a cow dried up, or set the hens to laying, but there were always women who couldn't conceive, cases of unrequited love. Her last client had been subway-cursed; the woman never waited less than fifteen minutes for a train. She had only to step in the subway car and suddenly there would be delays, doors that wouldn't close and track fires. That kind of problem was easy enough, and not really so different from taking a curse off a cow. And while magic work was sporadic, the sale of herbs was constant. She sold most of the herbs to the herbs stores like Aphrodisia on Bleeker Street, the rest to florists. It didn't make her rich, but at least it put food on the table.

She had her arms full with groceries, so when she saw someone at her door she hesitated a moment. She lived in a loft on the second floor of what had once been a fabric warehouse on Avenue C. In her neighborhood, when one saw someone at one's door, one was careful. But the person outside the door looked safe enough; neither one of the kids from the projects nor part of the punk/East Village art crowd. A client then. He was wearing a tee-shirt and jeans and was listening to a Walkman. He was staring at the seal on her door, a triangle, point upwards, inscribed in a circle. The triangle said DANBAGEN • LAPIENOP • RYNTBAETH. The circle said EMANUEL SABACHT ADONAG PANTHONY AHONY • MEFSYAS • SOTHER. It was rather impressive; not only did she never have problems with demons, but her place had never been broken into.

"Are you waiting for me?" Ragnar called.

"Ms. Flynn?" he said, clearly surprised. But he came down the stairs. "Let me help you." He was staring at her boots, flat black leather boots with a silver disk and a tail of fringe on the outside of each. She should be relieved that that was all he stared at, she knew the effect she must have. She was a redhead, stood five-ten in her stocking feet, and much as she tried to look like a Yank she suspected she was always a bit off.

He took one of her bags. Polite, she thought. She had a soft spot for people who were polite. Probably a

mark of her Irish upbringing. She had to hand him both bags in order to get her keys and unlock both deadbolts (only a fool would trust just the seal).

"Sardeen," she said, "get back." Sardanopolous, her cat, backed away from the door. He was a Russian Blue, not show quality, a gift from a client. She took one of the bags, and man and cat followed her across the length of the main room. Half of the room was a greenhouse, with row upon row of herbs in lines of trays and boxes. Along one end were flowers that she didn't use in her work, and the next row was half planted in tomatoes and vegetables, but the other five rows were herbs. The

*"I'm very sorry,
but I don't do
Great Magic at
all. So if it's
not a love charm
you're wanting,
I'm afraid I
can't help
you."*

room smelled of strange smells; licorice and humus and other spicy odors, mandragora, figwort, foxglove, blue mallow, asarabacca, poppy . . . And then at the darker end of the room, a couch and two chairs and the stereo and bookshelves. Her living room.

"Would you like a cup of tea?" she asked in the kitchen. He dropped the bag on the table and looked around. It was just a kitchen painted yellow, with an old gas stove (a Royal Rose) and her blender and Ian's drawings on the icebox.

"Sure," he said.
"What's your name?"
"Steven," he said.
She filled the kettle. "What can I do for you, Steven?"

"Lisa Sternlieb told me about you," he said.

Lisa Sternlieb, Lisa Sternlieb. It took a moment, then she had a vague memory of a student from NYU. Without checking her card box she couldn't know. Wasn't Lisa in love with someone? "Are you looking for a love charm or philter?" Ragnar asked.

"A charm?" he asked.
"I have two charms," she said. "I have a Simple for ten dollars and a

Sympathetic for forty-five dollars, but for the Sympathetic I need some possession of the beloved—hair, nail clippings, a piece of clothing. Actually, if you are interested in the Simple, I recommend making a novena to St. Jude, it's cheaper."

"What's that?"
"St. Jude, the patron saint of lost causes." She started taking things out of her bags. Ian's popsicles would melt if she didn't get them in the freezer. Thinking of Ian, she automatically checked the clock. Ian wouldn't be home from school for another hour and a half. "Check the back page of the *Village Voice*, it's usually there. You say the novena for nine straight days, and then you pay to put St. Jude's name in front of the public and give a little money to charity. Most people put a note in the *Personals* saying 'Thank you, St. Jude.' It's very effective as long as what you're asking won't cause harm to someone else and you have absolute faith. Unfortunately, in this day and age, very few people have faith. Also, neither the novena nor my charms will alter a person's sexuality. Straights like straights and gays like gays and there's naught that I can do about it." The kettle started to whistle. "Should I make a pot of black, or do you drink herb?"

"Oh," he said, "anything is fine."
"So," she said, "are you going to try the novena?"

"I'm not Catholic," he said, and smiled a bit wryly, "so I don't think I have faith."

"There are people who think of the saints as spirits who have been renamed by Christianity," she said. "You might try that tack."

"Well, it's not really my love life I'm worried about," he said. "Actually, I need a question answered." He was embarrassed, but he didn't squirm, and she respected that.

"I don't do Tarot readings," Ragnar said.

"I really wasn't looking for a reading." He was older than she had first thought, closer to her own age. She couldn't say how she knew but he was more formed than the usual undergraduate. "Is that the Seal of Solomon on your door?"

"No, that's one of the two Seals of the Earth."

"Can you tell me how to raise a demon?" he asked.

For a moment she couldn't think. She felt cold. Then her mind started working, one of those Satanists, or some loon—the Lord knew her occupation attracted too many of those. "Get out of my flat," she said.

"Ms. Flynn—" he said.

"I don't do business with the likes of you," she said. She was taller than he was, just slightly, but she stood straight over him, trying to will him back to the door. Ian, who would be home in an hour and a half, Ian who was six and who had been spared most of the vicissitudes of her profession.

But he held firm, although he did take a step back. "Ms. Flynn, please," he said. "I don't even know if you're for real, or if you're like the rest of them, but I'll pay you, up front, whether it works or not, I'm that desperate."

"You'll be leaving, and your desperation, too," she said.

"God knows, you're probably just another crazy ... can't I even tell you why?" In that moment he didn't look boyish at all, his hairline was high at the temples and it would be receding and she had a sense of him in a few more years, a mild-looking man, maybe a lawyer or a businessman, but with a hard, sharp mind working behind his mild eyes. One of those flashes where a body really sees into someone. A moment of something bigger than herself.

"Well. All right. Tell me your reasons and then be off."

"I've got a doppelganger," he grimaced. "Well, I suppose everyone does, but mine has ... manifested itself. I keep seeing it. Him. Whatever. At first, I would catch a glimpse of him in a crowd, out on the street. Then I kept seeing him and he ... taunted me. I don't know any other way to describe it."

She didn't believe in doppelgangers. She frowned a little, and he explained.

"I'd get off the train at Grand Central and as I was walking toward the stairs, I'd see him getting on another train. He'd wait, deliberately, until I saw him, and then we'd make eye contact and he'd hold it just for an instant and, sort of nod like we had some kind of understanding. And get on the train. I thought I was going crazy, of course. But now he's even bolder, he goes places where I go; I went into the deli, it's just around the corner, and they smiled at me and said, 'Oh, back so soon?' and of course I hadn't been there for a couple of days. And yesterday he was in my apartment. I think he's trying to take over my life."

Sad. And crazy, no doubt. "I'm very sorry, but I can't do anything about doppelgangers. In fact, I don't do great magic at all, so if it's not a love charm you're wanting I can't help you. What you probably need is an obeh woman. Now, you'll have to leave."

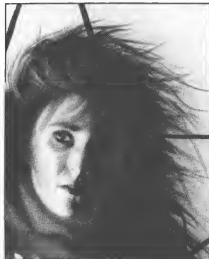
"You don't believe me, do you?" he said, and he smiled a bit, amused at

some private joke. "Of course, you must meet some pretty strange people."

She started toward the door and as she hoped, he did too. Nice thing about polite people, politeness was almost unconscious.

"The funny thing is, I've been thinking that all of you people are crazy," he went on. "I didn't know if I'd ever find someone who wasn't weird, who could really work magic. I never thought about having to prove that I wasn't a crazy."

"Well, I can assure you I'm a bit left of center myself," Ragnar said, opening the door. Sardanopolous ran to stand in the door, wanting to run in the hall.



Someone was walking down the hall, almost at the stairs. The guy glanced over his shoulder and his face was the same as the young man's next to her. The cat's back went up and he spat. Wildly she looked at Steven and saw him go white. She pushed him back into the apartment and slammed the door, and immediately thought that Ian would have to come up those stairs.

Ian, six years old. Ian would have to come up those stairs and that *thing* would be out there—that it *was* a thing she didn't doubt, not after Sardanopolous's reaction. The cat was nowhere to be seen; under the couch, she guessed, same place he went during electric storms. She wrenched open the door.

"What are you doing?" Steven said.

"My son is coming home from school soon, up those steps," she said. She sprinted down the hall and down the steps, skipping the last two steps before each landing. Out into the street, no sign of anything except the usual. Steven came down the steps behind her, not so quick. Holy Mother, she thought, and under her breath said the Twenty-third Psalm.

"You won't see him," Steven said,

"he disappears or something."

"Go back upstairs and wait. I'm going to pick up my son."

"He doesn't do anything," Steven said.

"I'm not taking any chances," she said.

"Then I'll walk with you."

She had to go back upstairs and close and lock the door, and every moment longer was a torment. Not that time would mean the same thing to a doppelganger, necessarily. Steven waited on the street for her, and matched her stride. Perhaps he was at Ian's school immediately, now.

"How did you become a magician?" Steven asked.

"I studied," Ragnar said. Then relenting, "It's in the family, my father was a thaumaturgist who married late in life—"

"What's a thaumaturgist?"

"A miracle worker, something like a rainmaker. But magic, true magic, was a kind of hobby and of course he used it on occasion." She flicked her hair back. She was aware of herself talking, and she was praying: 'Take care of Ian, Lord, please take care of Ian.' Her voice went on, "He was a man who was interested in all the sciences, especially natural science. He studied in Paris at the Sorbonne and took a degree in physics. His two children split his devotions. My brother, Bran, is a physician."

Steven stared at her, impatient.

"How did you come to be possessed of a doppelganger?" Ragnar asked quickly.

"I don't know." He said it with a kind of finality, as if he'd been over and over the question himself. It was her experience that people didn't attract that kind of attention without meddling, but perhaps he really wasn't aware of what he'd done. God knew, she had spent the last seven years of her life trying very hard not to attract that kind of attention. It had stopped her career and limited her to the two-bit magic of a village witch, but it had kept Ian safe.

At least until now.

She was trying to think of what to do. Something—what powers did she have, what weapons? She could not even be sure what one did about a doppelganger. She had read about them, to be sure, but hadn't really given them much thought. They seemed to be more philosophical metaphors than actual spirits. If Steven's doppelganger was his actual other half, then damaging it could hurt Steven. But if it was something else, then it would be best to get rid of it.

She should tell Steven to take his

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doppelganger and shove off. Then she could go back to selling love charms to college students. Then Ian would be safe.

She didn't have much choice. She couldn't just wait for Ian to come home. And she certainly couldn't leave Steven here. What had this fool done to attract a doppelganger? And why had he come to her door, damn him? "Come on," she said pushing him out the door.

IAN'S SCHOOL WAS CLOSE. HE WASN'T SUPPOSED to get out for another half-hour. He went to a private school, a Quaker school close to Union Square. It was expensive. On her application she had put her occupation as "entrepreneur" and in the interview she said she grew herbs.

She stopped at the door to the classroom and didn't see Ian. She saw Mary, one of his teachers (Ian's favorite, at home it was always, "Mary said...") and then she saw him sitting in a circle on the floor in a reading group. Mary looked up from what they were doing. She said something to the children and then came over. Ian looked up (a narrow face like a Spaniard's and silky straight black hair completely unlike her own). He smiled and waved and she smiled and waved back.

"Ms. Flynn, there was a man here to pick up Ian about fifteen minutes ago," Mary said, then she caught sight of Steven, "Oh, I'm sorry. You didn't arrange it with us..."

"No, Mary," Ragnar said, "I'm so glad. It wasn't this gentleman."

Mary frowned, looked at Steven.

"We look alike," Steven said.

"Oh," Mary said.

Ragnar almost went to Ian to pick him up. The thing had come here. Ian was in it, no longer ignored, no longer safe. She was in it, too. "I'm sorry, there's a minor emergency and I'll have to take Ian home with me," Ragnar said.

Mary didn't ask, she just called Ian. Ian got up, brushed off the knees of his Oshkosh overalls carefully. "Hi, mum." He stared at Steven.

"Hello, Ian, this is Steven. We're going home early."

"Why?" Ian was suspicious and she wanted to lie and say it was a treat or a holiday. There was already too much stress—don't talk to people on the street, don't get in cars; don't, don't, don't. But she had to make it minor, yet still be honest.

"Something with mum's work."

"I have to get my Transformer from

Greg. Can I watch *Dark Crystal* tonight?"

"We'll see." She watched him get his things. She wanted to gather him up, smell his hair, hug him, check him all over. Her American boy.

"What's *Dark Crystal*?" Steven asked.

"It's a video, a movie by the Muppet people." When he came back she held out her hand and he took it. "We're going to take a taxi home," she said. "Does that sound like a treat?"

Ian thought and then shrugged in the exaggeratedly adult fashion of New York children. "Okay, I guess. Did we get more bookshelves?"

*Into the circle
of light came a
huge, fat woman
with tangled hair
that rose in two
horns, riding
astride a goat
too small to
support her.*

"No, why?"

"Because we always take a taxi when we get bookshelves."

She knelt down and hugged him fiercely.

In the taxi Ian told Steven that his Transformer was going to eat Steven up. Steven professed interest but clearly didn't know what to do when Ian poked him with it and made growling noises. She made Ian sit on her lap and he made his Transformer walk in the air and then stuck it out the window. "Ian," she said, and he frowned. On some level he was picking up her nervousness, or maybe it was just the change in routine.

Back in the apartment she felt safe. She gave Steven a cup of tea and Ian a popsicle and she rang up her brother. "Bran? It's me... Nothing's wrong... I sound funny? Funny ha-ha? ... No, well things are strange, I have a client... right... Well, I'll explain when things are finished... I'm not, I'll just explain when it's easier to explain. I called because I wanted to know if Ian could stay with you and Beth and Caroline... no... yes, tonight... Bran, thanks, it's important... thanks..."

just don't make a scientist out of him... Oh, I've rented a copy of *Dark Crystal*, if Caroline would enjoy it Ian can bring it with him. Right... About forty-three." She smiled. "Ian, I have a client and I have to work tonight, so I'm going to take you to Grand Central and Uncle Bran will meet you at the station in Westchester."

Ian looked sullen, which was unusual; he liked his cousin Caroline. "I have to go to school tomorrow. Mary is going to finish the Gorilla book."

"Just this once, you don't. But Uncle Bran said you can take *Dark Crystal* and he'll play it on their VCR."

Ian knew he was being bribed, and she hated herself.

"Oh, fine," Ian said. The pain of a six-year-old's scorn.

THE LOFT HAD THREE BEDROOMS. STEVEN followed her to the first bedroom. "This is supposed to be my study," she said, "but I don't work here very much." She fished for her keys. Neither her bedroom nor Ian's had a lock on it, but this door did. She'd had the lock installed when Ian started to crawl because there was too much in the room to tempt a baby.

The room was dark and had a strange, mildew-medicinal smell to it. It was completely lined in shelves and chests with tiny drawers and cupboards. A gray metal office-style desk sat in the middle of the floor, directly under the light. There was an old manual Royal typewriter and piles of papers on the desk, one pile held down by a skull—a gift/joke from Ian's father, back when she and Luke had been together. Sardeen appeared at the door. He could hear this door unlocked from anywhere in the flat and he was intensely curious. He wrinkled his nose uncertainly.

"Is the cat your familiar?" Steven asked.

"Don't be a dolt," she said. She stood for a moment in front of the bookshelf, pulled down a book.

"What's that?" Steven asked.

"It's a Xerox of a manuscript by Hebrew of Sienna. They made it for me at Oxford, and it cost me a mint." She carried the volume to her desk.

"Who's Hebrew of Sienna?"

"A twelfth-century monk. He was an influence on Paracelsus. Don't worry, no one has heard of him." She went back to the shelf and pulled down two more books before finding what she wanted, and then read carefully, her lips moving as she followed the Latin. Every time she opened one of them, the scent took her back to when she was twenty-two and all of magic was open

to her. To the time before she met Luke at the New York Public Library, before the man with straight dark hair like her son's told her that every time a virgin passed the stone lions in front of the library, they roared. And she blushed.

"Mum?" Ian was at the door.

"What, love?"

"What'cha doin'?"

"Looking for something."

"Can I come in?"

She nodded. He came over to where she was standing.

"Can I type something?"

She finished what she was reading before getting him a piece of paper and putting it in the typewriter. He laboriously typed "Ian" while she went through two drawers. She pulled out two pieces of lambskin bleached white and put them on top of the book. Ian scooted off the chair when she opened one of the little drawers.

"Can I see the colors?"

She lifted him up so he could look at the verdigris, the white lead, and the vermillion before taking out the vial of vermillion. He carried it carefully to the desk for her and then climbed back on the chair to type some more. A little while later he carried the cat out for her. Steven watched silently.

Finally she locked the door and the three of them carried her haul to the kitchen. She spread the lambskin out, smoothing it with the palm of her hand, and then made an ink out of the vermillion. Slowly she drew a copy of the seal on her front door. Then she ran it swiftly over a flame, dappled it with water, rubbed dirt into the side she hadn't drawn on and whispered the names of the four elements—fire, water, earth, and air. She breathed on it five times, and then sprinkled it with a bit of incense, myrrh, aloes sulphur, and camphor. She breathed the names of the five genii above it.

On the second piece of lambskin she drew a rectangle. She drew a line bisecting the rectangle lengthwise, then two lines that bisected on the diagonals. In the middle she drew a circle. At the top of the rectangle she wrote R. THEAS YOU. At the bottom she wrote, with the piece turned upside down, ELY ELOY. Within the top triangles made by all the lines she wrote MALA. On the left she wrote ARIES and LEO. On the right, ALPHA ET U and at the bottom left she drew a square with a cross inside it. Then again she consecrated it with the four elements, breathed on it five times, sprinkled it with incense, myrrh, aloes, sulphur, and camphor, and breathed the names of the five genii above it again.

She carried the two pieces into the

front room.

"What are those?" Steven finally asked.

"The Earth seals," she said. "Think of them as a cross between a transporter and a circuit breaker."

"A transporter?" he asked.

"You know, science fiction."

"Mr. Spock," Ian said, "beam me up." Ragnar smiled at him.

On the floor of the front room she drew a cross with red chalk and inscribed the four points of the cross with a badly drawn man, eagle, lion, and bull. "I'm not much of an artist," she apologized. She placed the two diagrams at the north, then south, east and west, and finally at the center of the cross. Then she drew a pentacle about five feet across, two points ascendant, the sign of Satan. She took two long strides and drew another pentacle about the same size, but with one point ascendant, the sign of Christ. She went back into the kitchen and got a container of salt and used it to sprinkle around the edges of the pentacles she had drawn.

"Is that plain salt?" Steven asked.

She nodded.

"Have you ever done this before?"

"Not exactly," she hedged.

"How do you know what to do?"

"I look it up," she said. "I need a cup of tea." She didn't really know what she was doing, or if her sources could be trusted, and she didn't want to have to explain herself to him. He had dumped himself and his doppelganger

on her door and he could damn well take what came.

The truth was that raising a demon was a mortal sin. Always, she had played at earth-magics, and while magic might or might not be a sin, depending on one's interpretation of the writings of the Holy Fathers, there was no doubt that demonology was the blackest of sins.

But if that thing took Ian because she wouldn't act . . .

She still wasn't ready, she needed two more conditions; she needed to prepare a jar, she needed to have Ian out of here. She started the tea, trying to figure out what she could use for a container. She opened the refrigerator and scanned it, but she could see through all the jars and she wanted one that was opaque. Steven and Ian were looking at her. She left the kitchen and looked in her study, rooting through a shelf full of odds and ends, until she found an old metal film canister about three inches tall. Luke had left it. She found a candle that had been blessed and brought both of them back. Steven was talking to Ian. Maybe Steven could take Ian to Grand Central. No, on second thought, she'd better take Ian.

"What's that?" Ian asked her.

"It's a candle and a canister."

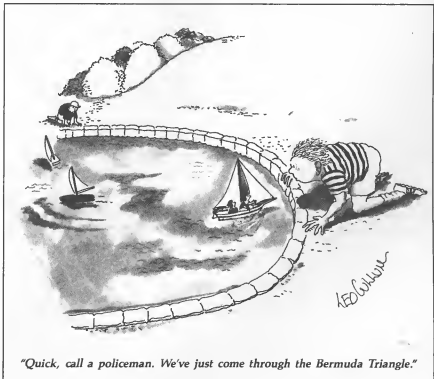
"What for?"

"To keep something in."

"Something little," Ian observed.

"Steven goes to school, too."

"He does?" Ragnar said. "Where are



"Quick, call a policeman. We've just come through the Bermuda Triangle."

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you going to school?"

"Columbia."

"Doctoral?"

"In Medieval History," he said. "I'm doing my dissertation on how pagan/magical practices affected Christianity during the eleventh century."

He had absolutely no awareness of the importance of what he'd said. "You are studying magic? As an historian?" Ragnar glanced at Ian, who was watching the conversation raply, and thought about sending him to his room.

"Not magic, the influences of paganism, really." Steven began to look uncomfortable, and traced a design on the table with his finger.

"Don't do that," she snapped.

He jerked.

"If you've seen a diagram somewhere and unconsciously trace it—that thing is roaming around out there. You people are a menace!"

"What, historians?"

"Students, academics, people who read about the old practices without really knowing what is going on. Like high school students making atomic bombs."

"Listen," he said, defensive. "all I am doing is writing about how the Roman Catholic Church absorbed European pagan influences. It's not even a particularly original topic, I just happened to come across some sources that I think are interesting—"

"Who?"

He squirmed. "It's all academic, I wasn't painting diagrams in red ink and mumbling Latin. I've read enough to know that with magic, everything has to be done exactly right or it doesn't work—"

"Who?" she smacked the table with the flat of her hand and Ian and Steven jumped.

"A diary," he said, "by a Flemish alchemist who wrote under the pseudonym of Simon Magus."

"Giving practices?"

"Of course; who would care if he didn't? And they're very different from yours, by the way."

"Progress," she snapped. "Did you read them out aloud?"

"Well, maybe. I don't remember reading the whole thing aloud, but I like to read out loud. Hell, I don't even know if I believe in all this."

"Well, it believes in you."

"What exactly are you going to do?" Steven asked.

She didn't like discussing it in front

of Ian, he tended to remember far more than people gave children credit for. She tried to think of something evasive, but couldn't think of anything to say. "You asked me if I could conjure a demon. So I was thinking that I would call one up, ask just what this doppelganger of yours is, and then decide what to do."

"What's a doppelganger?" Ian asked.

What to say? Her eyes met Steven's over the table. Ian's class had gone to the United Nations, where they'd seen some sort of memorial to Hiroshima and he'd had nightmares about that, had screamed when the radio station did a test of the Emergency Broadcast

Ragnar leaned forward. In that instant, her hair must have swung out of the pentacle, because something yanked it and the room went pitch.

System. She didn't want him to worry about doppelgangers. "It's something Steven needs to get rid of."

"When you call will they tell you how to get rid of it?"

"I hope," Ragnar said.

"What is it? Is it like a wart?"

"Pretty much," Steven said. Ragnar found herself smiling in spite of herself.

The buzzer sounded. Ian ran to the door—overalls and tennis shoes. "Ian," she said, torn between her feeling that he shouldn't answer the door and her desire not to scare him. She got up and followed him, watched him stretch to reach the top deadbolt—it always looked too difficult for him, but he shot it easily on tiptoe. Sardeen wandered down the hall, his tail floating lazily in the air, and Steven came into the main room.

"Ian!" she shrieked, because it was Steven at the door, and of course, Steven was behind her.

That other was reaching for Ian and Ian shrank back against the door, whether terrified by her shriek or the thing she didn't know. The cat ran. And Steven hit his double with a flying tackle.

It took a couple of steps back, but didn't seem much moved.

"*Adiuro te serpens antique, per iudicem vivorum et mortuorum, per factorem tuum, per factorem mundi, per ... per ...*" she couldn't remember the rest of the words, but it had stopped and taken another step backwards, which allowed her to get to Ian, and snatch him. She grabbed Steven's arm and pulled him. He half-scrambled, half-fell across the threshold and she kicked the door shut.

"It felt like stone—" Steven said, and the window shattered. Ian screamed and she bent over him without thinking. Tiny pieces of glass hit her, landing on her clothes and in her hair. She picked Ian up and ran to the pentacle she had drawn with one point ascendant. "Steven," she shouted, "come here!" The wind was whipping around the flat, battering her plants, blowing paper around. Steven bent double against the wind. But he followed her into the pentacle, and as suddenly as it had started, the wind stopped. Ragnar could hear traffic noises through the broken window, and the sound of a radio playing.

"What's happening?" Steven asked.

"It's not a doppelganger, it's a demon," she said, and handed him Ian.

"Mama!" Ian's voice rose to a shriek and he grabbed her hair, not wanting to let go of her.

"It's all right, angel," she soothed. She stroked his hair for a moment, fine and silky. "It's like a film, all right? You don't have to watch." He relented and let Steven hold him, watching her with his cheek pressed against Steven's polo shirt. She was going to get this over fast.

She turned and surveyed the room. It was broad daylight, but that shouldn't make a difference. The room was a mess. Now, demons changed their names every forty-nine years, but their names fell in patterns, and if she had understood her studies right, she should have a pretty good chance of falling on a name. The way to conjure a demon was simply to call his name. With the earth seals to force him to be visible, he should appear.

"By thy name, I conjure thee, Melech," she said.

Nothing happened. Steven said, "What—"

"I'll explain later. By thy name, I conjure thee, Adramelech." No surprise that that one didn't work. She had read it, which meant it had probably already been used. She tried Abmelech with no results. "By thy name, I conjure thee, Belphamelech!"

She had meant to say "Belmelech."

but had added the extra syllable without meaning to. She knew as soon as she said it that something was happening. It got dark, except for the pentacle across from them. And it got cold. And then she smelled something like ammonia, and Ian sneezed.

She had the incredible feeling she'd made a mistake, and she remembered that the candle and the film canister were still sitting on the kitchen table. *Jesus Christ, she prayed, hold us in the palm of your hand.*

Into the circle of light came a huge fat piebald woman, her face and arms splotched white and purple-black. She looked to weigh three or four hundred pounds, the flesh rolled off her like terraces on a mountainside. The lower part of her face was black, in both pigment and feature, but her eyes were blue and her eyebrows were blond and the upper part of her face looked Caucasian. She had tangled hair that rose in two horns, and she was riding astride a goat that looked too small to support her weight.

It was a real goat. It had the amber, slit-pupiled eyes of a real goat and goat horns and hooves that looked cloven. The woman's feet were broad and calloused and cracked. She smiled widely and her teeth were yellow, and she held her feet awkwardly in the air.

Ragnar Fionna Flynn tried to speak and couldn't. The demon laughed. Ian hid his face against Steven's chest.

She had to do something. She wielded her voice. "Belphamelech," she said. "Change thy form to something more comely."

The demon looked down at the horny yellow nail of its big left toe.

"Belphamelech," Ragnar said sternly. "In the name of the Son of God, Our Lord Jesus Christ, change thy form!"

The woman and the goat disappeared, and a black cock scratched in the middle of the floor, looking just as stupid as chickens look.

"Belphamelech! Mus: I remind you of the fall you took and invoke the name of the woman who bore our Savior and crushed thy master's head beneath her heel!"

The cock fluttered once and a young man stood there. He was wearing jeans and a sleeveless tee-shirt and Nike sneakers and he could have been any of the kids she saw on the street corner. He crossed his sunbrown arms (he had a tattoo of a goat's head on his left bicep, it was inscribed in a triangle, point down) standing insolently, with all his weight on one hip and said, "What do you want, woman?"

"First, an answer to a question."

He sighed and rolled his eyes towards the ceiling. "Buy an almanac."

"Be civil," she warned, "I have a short temper." He shrugged sullenly. "This one," she gestured at Steven, "is being plagued by one of yours, is that right?"

"Not mine," he said.

"Thy master's, Belphamelech."

He nodded.

"Answer out loud, Belphamelech, or I'll say a rosary in thy name."

"Yes," he said, clearly angry.

"Yes, what?"

"Yes, one of my master's servants plagues him!"

She nodded, "Good. Fetch him."



"Oh, Magica," he whined, suddenly frightened, "I can't, I'm nothing, a minor, a screwtape. I haven't the strength, I'd be clawed and gutted, turned inside-out and left to drip blood a hundred-thousand years. My genitals would be burned in slow fires—"

"Belphamelech!" she cut him off, "Fetch him now or I'll inscribe a blessed candle with your name and burn it as an offering in St. Patrick's—a long candle, Belphamelech!"

He disappeared.

Ian had his eyes closed and was sucking his thumb. Steven was pale.

"This is really real," he said. "I mean, I kept thinking that it wasn't, but I saw it, unless this is some incredible hoax, I mean, you know, maybe you've got a projector hidden somewhere or something, special effects or something." He couldn't stop talking once he started. "If it is, I've fallen for it. I mean, maybe I should convert or something. If I converted, would I be safe? Of course, I'd have to really believe, like you said about that prayer to that saint, the one of lost causes. But what I really want to know is, how did you learn to know what was real and what was bo-

gus, because there are mostly fakes around, believe me, I mean the kind of people who think that people from Venus are sending them messages about true love through the electrical outlets in their home, and really, what do you put down for an occupation on your income tax form, but I guess, come to think of it, this is non-taxable income, right? I—"

"I put 'herbalist,'" she cut in.

"What?"

"On my income tax, I put 'herbalist.'" She smiled.

"Oh." It seemed to have cut something, and Steven fell silent.

"What religion are you, anyway?" Ragnar asked.

"My mother was Lutheran, but I'm not really anything."

It was still dark in the room, like night, as if there was no window. Ragnar could not feel a breath of air. The ammonia smell was still there, but now it was more like urine. Maybe she had asked Belphamelech to do something he couldn't.

"Belphamelech?" she asked.

"Magica?" he whined, and he was there, in the pentacle. His hair was messed up and his tee-shirt was ripped.

"Where is it?" she demanded, expecting him to say he couldn't do it.

"Here, Magica." He held out a walnut.

"That's it?" she asked.

"Yes, Magica."

"Prove it."

"I promise, Magica."

"In the beginning was the word and the Word was made flesh—"

He cringed and then made a motion like someone snapping a towel, and the doppelganger stood there.

"Belphamelech," she warned, "If this is a trick, I will call you back and—"

"No, no, no-no-no, Magica. It is him."

"Tell me its name, Belphamelech." She had to know its name, then she would have some power over it.

"Magica, I can't ... I'll make you rich. I'll bring you gold, Magica, gold bars from South Africa, Magica." He was sweating. And the creature next to him twisted in his hand. He appeared to hold it by the scruff of the neck, the way one might hold a cat, and there was something grotesque about the looseness of the creature's neck.

"Belphamelech, I can pray over you for hours."

"No, please, I won't bring you gold, I will make you famous, I will make them name a university after you, your family will prosper—"

WORK

"The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary and she conceived of the Holy Spirit. Hail Mary, full of grace—"

"Drammon!" Belphamelech shouted.

"Drammon? Is that your name?"

The creature shuddered.

"Good."

"Can I go, Magica?" Belphamelech asked.

"Soon, demon. But I have a task for you first." She glanced at Steven. "I am going to send my assistant, whom you have tormented, to another room to get something. But let me tell you now, Belphamelech, if anything happens to him, in fact, if I don't like the way you look at him, I will call you up each evening until the year two-thousand-nine and I will sprinkle you with holy water for the pleasure of watching your torment. I will have masses said in your name in India. I will have your name printed in newspapers with a blessing following it, and every time it is printed, and every time it is read, you will be blessed in the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ—"

"Please, Magica!"

"Do you understand, Belphamelech?"

The youth nodded. "He's safe, Magica. You are wise and strong and clever, and I'm your servant."

She didn't like the sound of that, but she had to have the film canister and the candle, blessed and dipped in

holy water. "Go into the kitchen and get the candle and the canister, and a book of matches off the stove," she told Steven.

He swallowed, but nodded. He handed her the can, who grabbed her shirt in both fists, and stepped a foot outside of the pentacle, watching Belphamelech and Drammon, and then another step. He stood for a moment, two steps from the pentacle, as if not sure whether to go any further, and then briskly walked into the kitchen. He picked up the candle and the canister and brought them back. "Put the canister on the floor," she pointed outside the pentacles. Steven put it down carefully. She told him to light the candle and he did.

"Belphamelech, make Drammon a walnut again."

Belphamelech knew what was coming and so did Drammon, for Drammon wailed once, a noise that ascended up and off the register of sound she could hear, a swift pain, and then Drammon was a walnut.

"Now," she said, "put him in the canister."

Belphamelech did not move from his pentacle but suddenly the walnut was in the canister.

"Quick," she said to Steven, "Drip wax all around the opening to seal it." He didn't understand.

"Hold the candle sideways," she prodded, "and drip the wax all the way around the lip of the cap."

Steven held the candle sideways, and then realized what he was supposed to do.

Ragnar inched closer to the edge of

the pentacle to watch, and Belphamelech danced from one foot to the other in anxiety Steven's hand was not steady, and he kept missing and spattering the canister. Slowly he turned it.

She put the can down at her feet and he grabbed her leg, watching, still sucking his thumb. She hoped that this wouldn't scare him too much. He didn't seem particularly frightened, but he was very quiet. Belphamelech was in a frenzy of nervousness, hopping on first one Nike and then the other. Steven held up the canister, and there was a rim of wax all the way around.

"All right," she said, "Belphamelech, go back to where you came from." She leaned forward a bit more, and in that instant some of her hair must have swung out of the pentacle because something yanked it and the room went pitch.

"lan!" she shrieked, and fell across him. It slowed her down—and saved her life, because Steven threw himself across her legs. She was on her hands outside the pentacle, Steven holding her legs inside the pentacle. Ian was screaming. Whatever had her had twisted her hair, so that she had to turn her face up toward the ceiling. "*Adiuro te serpents antique, per Iudicem vivorum et fortuorum, per factorem tuum*," she could barely spit out the words, and felt herself sliding, "*per factorem mundi, per eum qui habet potestatem mittendi te in Gehennam, ut ab hoc famulo Dei*," for a moment the grip seemed to loosen and she went to her knees, but then it tightened again. She felt like her hair would be torn out by the roots, "*qui ad Ecclesiae sinum recurrit, cum metu et exercitu furoris*—" she heard Ian cry, "Mama," and for a moment her mind went blank. "With the fear and the torment of thy terror..." What came next? She was such a fool to think that she could get away with it. Belphamelech had been waiting.

The ammonia stench was strong, and she felt something wet. It was dripping down her hair. Her neck hurt. She was having trouble getting a breath. She could hear something breathing next to her, something that breathed in three-quarter time, as if it inhaled, the air swirled within some sort of cavern, and then it exhaled. Each exhalation brought the smell of ammonia. She would be drawn into that. Something bleated; the goat? And a warm, obscene tongue licked her ear. Had she not been so tightly held she would have shuddered. *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, she thought, and she couldn't even remember the next words. Please help me,*

SPOTLIGHT

MICHAEL GALLOGLACH



Born in Ohio, Michael Galloglach came to New York City a few years ago, determined to make it as a writer. "I got off a plane in Newark, New Jersey, in 1982," writes Galloglach, "with a tentative job at NYU, and no place to live, and the somewhat innocent belief that it was possible to get a nice little place in the Village for about \$250 a month. I ended up living on the edge of Bedford-Stuyvesant for a couple of years instead."

While earning an M.A. from NYU, and teaching at the City University of New York, Galloglach wrote a number of short stories, poems, and strange little ballads. "Most were rejected with very nice letters as 'too interesting,'" recalls Galloglach. "I now live—and teach—in the People's Republic of China, where housing is also scarce, but rent is only sixty-six cents per month."

heavenly Father, though I have committed this blackest of sins. She whispered whatever came into her head, "tui festinus discedas, Belpheamelech."

And the sudden release of pressure made her fall back against Steven, and it was evening. Outside she heard a horn and smelled the city smell of car exhaust.

Ragnar had fallen. She sat up slowly. Her neck hurt. She was afraid to turn her head. Her hair felt wet. Ian. Ian would be frightened. She twisted from her waist, looking for him, "Ian."

He stood looking at her. Then he took a couple of uncertain steps in her direction. She held out her arm, and he came to her. She hugged him, and then he stiffened—she felt his whole body stiffen—and he screamed.

"Ian!" she said, but he was pushing against her with all his might. She let him go and he pushed away, still screaming in rage and fear.

"Ian, what's wrong?" she asked.

Steven tried to grab him, but Ian wanted none of it.

"Mama!" he wailed, and to Steven, "Go away! I want my mama!"

"Ian, tell me what's wrong," she said.

"You stink!" he said. Her hair, she still smelled of ammonia. She scrambled to her feet, holding her hand against her neck.

"It's okay," she said, "Everything is gone. Everything is okay now." Steven scooped Ian up, and although he protested, he didn't fight.

She went into the bathroom to shower, but couldn't bring herself to close the door. There were no safeguards in the bathroom, she'd be naked and alone. She decided to wash her hair in the kitchen sink. She grabbed her shampoo and went into the kitchen.

She couldn't take off her shirt so she got it wet, but it didn't matter. She soaked the ends of her hair in the soapy water, scrubbed furiously to get it clean.

Then she wrapped it in a clean towel, got Ian a popsicle from the refrigerator and simply picked him up and put him on her lap as if there had never been any question. He leaned his head against her chest and watched the adults talk, dribbling popsicle down her shirt. She felt his head move when she breathed, imagined the sound of her voice rumbling in his ear.

"This place is a mess," Steven said. It was, glass all over. "I'll go up to Westchester tonight with Ian and stay with my brother and his wife," Ragnar said. "Tomorrow I'll clean up."

"You handled yourself pretty well," said Steven.

"I was stupid, careless, unprepared—"

"You did fine."

"I almost got all of us killed. If you hadn't grabbed me—" She looked up; saw Steven grinning at her.

"You're welcome."

"Thanks," she added, hastily. It was funny. He didn't look like a particularly courageous person. But when the time came, he'd done well enough. He was smart and sensible—probably too smart for his own good. Just incredibly naive. He'd just done the equivalent of burning the Mafia, and it didn't seem to faze him. He'd need advice to keep him out



of more trouble; someone to teach him the safeguards.

He'd make a good friend, she realized. Someone she could talk to about magic. Most of those who really believed these days were fringe people, the kind who bought the *National Enquirer*.

No more than a friend, of course. Luke might believe in divorce, but the Church didn't. Once married, she was still married by sacrament. But at least Steven was someone she could talk to who wouldn't think she was crazy.

"You know, I hate to ask this, but I should," Steven said. "I mean, this is pretty specialized service. How much is this going to cost me?"

"A thousand dollars—plus damages." It was the first sum that came into her head.

He nodded. "Okay. I have to tell you, I don't have anywhere near that kind of money—I mean, I can pay you two hundred now, and I'll just have to pay you in dribs and drabs for the rest."

Somehow she doubted that he'd try to stiff her. "I understand. The first thing you ought to do is have that," she meant the film canister, "encased in con-

crete and dropped into the Hudson or made the cornerstone of a building or something."

She picked up the canister. It had been a great magic. Her neck hurt, and she was frightened, but it had been a great magic. Not the piddly little charms of a local witch, but the work of a real magician. Belpheamelech had even called her "Magica."

She shook her head. This was no time to start dreaming. There had been enough excitement for one day. Besides, you didn't choose the work; the work chose you.

The phone rang, startling her. She put Ian on the floor and caught the phone on the third ring (just before the answering machine).

"Ms. Flynn?" a woman asked.

"Speaking," she said, wary. Too many surprises.

"My friend Carol Ortega recommended you. I'm not in the habit of calling people like you, but well, my ex-husband is a doctor, you know, and he did the tests on Luis Ortega and he said *nothing* but a miracle could make Luis Ortega potent."

Ragnar remembered. It had been a rather difficult case because Carol Ortega had insisted that her husband not know that magic was being used. When the pregnancy test came back positive she had paid Ragnar five hundred dollars.

"What can I do for you, Ms.—" Ragnar found herself looking at the mess of her living room, dirt blown out of plant boxes and herbs uprooted.

"Miss Wagner. Cathy Wagner. This may sound a little strange," the woman laughed, embarrassed. "I want it to rain at a wedding. My ex-husband's wedding, in fact." Miss Wagner's voice was chilly when she said, "in fact."

Weather magic, too large and complicated. People didn't realize that rain in Connecticut could mean changing the weather in Denver. "I'm sorry Miss Wagner—I don't—" Ragnar started.

"Believe me, I'm willing to pay," the woman said.

Something struck Ragnar. She had a demon in her power. If she was stuck with Belpheamelech, until she figured out what to do with him she might as well use him. "Ah, Miss Wagner, weather, ah, control, is very expensive, very difficult. I'd have to do some research. Can you give me a number where I can reach you?"

At least two thousand dollars to make it rain. She could handle Belpheamelech. After all, she'd done it once. She was a magician, wasn't she? ■

TZ SCREENING ROOM



▲ 18 AGAIN!

In yet another of this year's old-becomes-young films, ninety-one-year-old George Burns plays an eighty-one-year-old millionaire who

switches places with his eighteen-year-old grandson in *18 AGAIN!* (New World Pictures).

PHOTO: © 1988 NEW WORLD PICTURES



◀ RETRIBUTION

Committing suicide has unexpected consequences, as George Miller (Dennis Lipscomb, pictured here in heavy make-up) discovers after leaping off a men's shelter. Before he can enter

the afterlife, the spirit of a murder victim drags him back to Earth and uses his body as its tool of vengeance in *RETRIBUTION*, a Unicorn Pictures release.

PHOTO: © 1987 UNITED FILM DISTRIBUTION CO.

◀ POLTERGEIST III

The ghosts are back for another go-round in *POLTERGEIST III*, the second sequel to one of the most successful ghost films of all time. The late Heather O'Rourke reprises her role of Carol Freeling, who moves in with her cousins, with the specters close on her heels.

PHOTO: © 1988 MGM/UA
ENTERTAINMENT CO.



BEETLEJUICE ▶

Killed in an auto accident, the Maitlands (Geena Davis and Alec Baldwin) are cursed to spend the next one hundred twenty-five years trapped in their old home. It's not long before they summon Betelgeuse, a free-lance "bio-exorcist," to scare off the new living tenants. Michael Keaton turns in a kinetic performance in the title role in *BEETLEJUICE*, a Geffen/Warner Bros. film.

PHOTO: © 1988 THE GEFFEN
FILM COMPANY



◀ LIGHT YEARS

Cartoon movies are experiencing something of a revival in such films as *An American Tail* and *When the Wind Blows*. Now, from France, comes *LIGHT YEARS*, a science fiction tale about a race struggling to recover from ecological abuses which have spawned horrifying and beautiful mutations (Miramax Films).

PHOTO © 1988 MIRAMAX FILMS

◀ THE INVISIBLE KID

Friendly Officer Terrell (played here with great, uh, emotion by Thomas Cross) accidentally eats some of teen whiz-kid Grover Dunn's (Jay Underwood, far left) invisibility powder in Taurus Entertainment's release *THE INVISIBLE KID*. When one of Dunn's schoolmates uses the powder for evil, the real trouble begins. (Also pictured: Chynna Phillips, center, as Dunn's girl friend Cindy.)

PHOTO: © 1988 TAURUS
ENTERTAINMENT CO.

MITCH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 61

up, they take Mitch back to the dressing room. I don't get to go. They say there's too many people back there already.

So I head out a side door to the big parkin lot. There's a plot of grass around front of the building, so I sit down there to "soak up some rays." It's pretty hot, but dry & sunshiny. There's hills in front of me, sandy brown ones with green trees sprinkled around. The trees look like parsley bits from where I am. Cars are zippin by on the street, & the sky's so blue you'd think there was something electrical in it. I smoke a cigarette & look at the sky for awhile. Pretty soon I figure it's time to go back in.

They still won't let me in the dressing room, so I can't see Mitch. I sit on a metal chair off to one side of the "set," lookin at the big Pinball Machine & hopin Mitch gets a shot at it.

THEN THEY FLIPPED ON ALL THE LIGHTS. It was the glitziest pinball machine I ever saw. It looked even bigger & fierier than on TV. About 8 foot wide & 20 foot high. Hangin in the air was a bunch of silver letters spellin out its name. THE MILLION DOLLAR PAIN & GAIN MACHINE.

It was on a ramp, so the audience could see the playfield—that's where all the bumpers & stuff are. The flipper buttons were on the front, since the playfield was too wide to stretch your arms around. That would be tough for Mitch to get used to. Who ever heard of a pinball game with the flipper buttons on the front?

The whole cabinet was silver. The lights bounced off it like a mirror. The weirdest thing about it was the backglass. The backglass in a pinball game is on the front of the backbox—that big box that sticks up behind the playfield. The backglass is where they usually put the name—Fireball, Odin, Black Knight—and the score counters.

That backglass was black as the ace of spades. There was smoky stuff & stars in it, but you could still make out a sort of ugly face. It looked like the face went back into the backglass, like one of those 3-D pictures. I guess it was supposed to look expensive & scary both. It worked.

There was one scoreboard across the bottom of the backglass. It had red digit numbers in a black background. The scoreboard looked like a big ugly mouth, with those 6 red zeroes sittin in there like teeth—000,000—all set up for a new game.

Stars & comets were trailin around

the face, but it was the eyes that made it scary. The eyes were tall & thin. They flashed all different colors. Bright blue, then purple, then red, then gold. On & on like that. The colors lasted about a second each, right now, since nobody was playin the Machine. When somebody was playin, the colors went faster. If you won some money they'd flash gold at the end of the game. They'd go bright red if the player was gettin a shot of pain. I'd seen it all on TV.

I wanted to wish Mitch good luck, but I figured he probably didn't need it anyhow. I sure hoped he'd get a chance to play that Machine. I lit up a cigarette & put it out right away.

*It was the
glitziest pinball
machine I ever saw.
The backglass was
black as the ace
of spades, but
you could still
make out an ugly,
scary face.*

THAT'S WHEN THE BIG SIGN LIGHTS UP—
On the Air. Here comes the music out of about 20 loudspeakers. The audience goes wild. They scream & holler & clap with the music— & just exactly when they're not clappin so hard anymore, here comes Dan McDonald, the MC guy. He's got orange makeup on his face. He's got black hair & a row of teeth like white lights.

"Good evening, ladies & gentlemen & our millions of friends at home!" he goes. The audience freaks out. "Welcome to The Million Dollar Pain & Gain Machine!" Then he goes into his speech about the rules, even though everybody knows the rules already. It's like a regulation. "The rules of our game are simplicity itself," he says. "Players vie against each other in our preliminary rounds, matching their knowledge for the chance to play the Million Dollar Pain & Gain Machine. Where, if their fingers are fast, they can win up to One Million Dollars! But one wrong move, & the Machine might just as easily give them . . ."

"Something else!" yells the audience. "That's right! And that something else is a Small Electric Shock. But re-

member, friends—not one iota of harm can ever be done to a contestant. That little shock's just a little reminder of what we say around here . . ."

"No pain, no gain!" shouts every single person in the audience.

"Right again!" goes Dan. "Now, Johnny, will you introduce our two contestants!"

Mitch wasn't one of them. It was Mary Lou Somebody from Pensacola, Florida, & Eugene Davis from Little Rock, Arkansas. They both kept hoppin up & down a little, like your dog when he has to go outside. Dan says, "Mary Lou & Eugene, are you ready to play for a chance to win One Million Dollars?"

"Yes, sir," they say. "Yes, Dan, we sure are."

I keep lookin around for Mitch to show his face, but he must still be in the dressing room. Probably watchin it all himself. If he is, I know he'll be answerin the questions better than these two.

Mary Lou & Eugene sit down behind these two little desks with their names lit up on the front. Dan waves his arm & the gold curtain goes up in front of the subject boxes. The boxes are lit up with those "walking lights" like at a car lot. The categories are The States, Movies, Sports of all Sorts, High Tech, & The Double Value Mystery Category.

Eugene wins the flip of the big coin, which is the size of a trashcan lid. He picks Sports of all Sorts.

From his platform up above their heads, Dan reads the question while the front slides off the category box. He says, "Eugene, for 50 points, name the baseball player who hit the most home runs in a major league career."

Hank Aaron. Jesus Christ, even I know that. Hank Aaron.

Eugene thinks real hard, but he doesn't know the answer. Mitch'll clean up on this show. Just as time is runnin out, Eugene says "Willie Mays?" The buzzer goes off & the audience goes "Awwwwww!"

"Mary Lou!"

"Is it Henry Aaron?"

"Right, for 50 points!"

Dingdingdingding! & the audience claps real loud for Mary Lou. She goes for the throat then, pickin the Double Value Mystery Category. There's some spooky music while the front of the category box slides off.

"For 100 points, Mary Lou, can you name the scientist who discovered penicillin? Take your time, now"

"Alexander Fleming."

"Is right!"

Not bad, I'm thinkin. This girl might be tough.

They go away for a commercial & then Mary Lou polishes Eugene off with no sweat. Dan smiles at the camera & says, "When we come back, Mary Lou will try her hand for the fourth time at the Million Dollar Pain & Gain Machine!"

The audience yells all the way through the commercial. They can hardly keep their seats in their seats. Pretty soon Dan's talkin to the camera again.

They give Eugene a TV & get rid of him. Then all the lights go off everywhere but around the Machine. Dan does another bit about the million bucks & steps back so Mary Lou can get started. The pinball's about the size of a bowling ball, but it's light. Must be aluminum. Mary Lou pulls back the plunger & puts the ball in play.

She's not too good of a pinball player. Uses both flippers at the same time. That way you can't pass the ball back & forth, or hold it on your flipper, or anything. Still, she's doing pretty good. The ball hits a couple bumpers & knocks down 2 Pot-o-Gold targets. She's got 80,000 points, but she's got to go all the way to a million if she wants the million bucks. The ball hops off the left sidewall & goes up into the Rainbow Chute. The eyes in the Machine go yellow-orange-red-purple. All of a sudden she's got 180,000. But then she gets excited & flips the ball straight in the Black Hole. Bad news for Mary Lou. The crowd moans like they're real sad, but their faces are excited. The 3-D eyes in the backglass go red. Here comes the pain.

Mary Lou kind of jerks away, but it's not a big deal. It's like a little jolt of static electricity—they don't want to hurt anybody. She makes a little eek sound & grits her teeth. It's all over before you know it. Dan comes & puts his arm around her. She looks a little shook up, but she smiles. He gives her a kiss right on the mouth.

"How about a great big hand for our current champion?" he says.

The crowd claps & stomps their feet. Mary Lou smiles a little bigger.

Dan says, "It wasn't so bad, now was it, Mary Lou?"

"Oh, not bad at all, Dan," she says. "I really hope I get another chance."

"That's the spirit!"

Johnny's voice comes boomin out of the loudspeakers. "And she's right, Dan. That was only a 4 on our pain scale of 10!"

"But it was worth 181,000 points," says Dan. "Or \$18,100!"

"Yaaaaaaaay!" goes the studio audience.

"Bringing Mary Lou's total winnings in 4 trips to the Machine to \$43,500!"

"Yaaaaay! Ooooooh!"

"Now let's bring on our next challenger! Johnny, would you introduce us, please?"

"Glad to, Dan. Meet Mitchell Mason, floor supervisor at South Water Tool & Die in Chicago, Illinois!"

Mitch has got his big chance at last. I'm yellin louder than anybody.

"Welcome, Mitch," Dan says. "It's all right if I call you Mitch, isn't it?"

Mitch is sort of wincin in the lights. He says, "Sure."

"Good to have you on *The Million Dollar Pain & Gain Machine!*"

"Thanks, Dan. I'm glad to be here."

"Tell the folks, Mitch—just what is it you do at Southport Tool & Die?"

"South Water Tool & Die."

"Of course."

"Well, mainly, I tell the other guys what to do."

Dan & the crowd laugh a lot at that. Mitch looks uncomfortable, like maybe his new jacket's too tight. He pulls on his tie & scratches his neck.

Dan smiles. "Sounds like good work, if you can get it." Then he starts walkin up to his platform. It looks like nobody told Mitch what to do, because he follows Dan up the stairs.

"But enough chit-chat!" Dan says.

"Are you ready to try your luck against our champion?" He turns around. Mitch is only about one inch from his face.

"I think so, Dan. Where do I sit?"

Everybody has another good laugh, while Dan takes Mitch by the arm & leads him down to his desk. Now, instead of EUGENE, it says MITCH, with lights runnin all around his name. Dan runs back up to his microphone. "If everyone's ready," he says, "let's play!"

Up goes the curtain on the new categories—TV IQ, Rhymes & Riddles, North America, Football, & The Double Value Mystery Category. I figure Mitch can get everything right anyway, but Football has got to be a complete lock.

Mary Lou wins the toss. But she misses the 3 largest provinces in Canada in terms of geographical area, so Mitch gets a shot at it.

"Quebec, Ontario, & British Columbia," he says.

"Very good, Mitch!" Dan looks a little surprised. "That was a tough one! You have 50 points. Choose your category."

"Football, please, Dan."

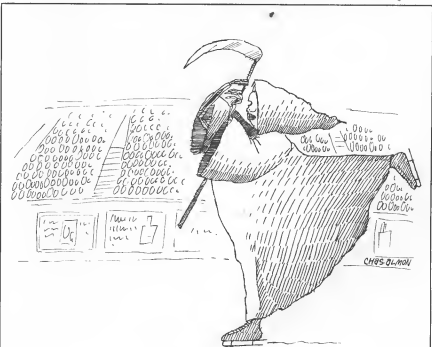
"A great subject," says Dan, "as long as you're not betting!" He laughs. So does the crowd, but not Mitch. He's already readin the question as the category box slides off.

"Mitch, for 50 points, which NFL team has appeared in the most—"

"Dallas," Mitch says. "Five times."

"Exactly right! You have 100 points!"

All kinds of applause for Mitch. They're startin to like him, especially since Mary Lou has zero points.



"Judging by his blade position, Rodger, I believe he's about to execute the death spiral."

MITCH

She plays it close to the vest & gets one right on TV IQ. Then Mitch says it was curds & whey Little Miss Muffet ate. Now he's ahead 150 to 50. Mary Lou gets one right about the Hudson Bay. Then Mitch goes for the clincher. You only need 250 points to win.

"The Mystery Category please, Dan," he says. The crowd claps a whole lot, then gets quiet.

"Mitch, for 100 points & the game, can you tell us what most ordinary people would call *parotitis*, a common infectious disease that usually strikes children?"

"It's the mumps, Dan."

"You're our new champion!"

The crowd goes wild. Mary Lou goes home. After another commercial, Dan takes Mitch over to the big Machine. I'm jumpin up & down, trying to see around the TV cameras. The lights go off everywhere but around Mitch & the Machine. Big white spotlights are glarin down on Mitch's bald spot. The Machine's all set to go. It's hummin. The eyes in the backglass flip on & off, red & gold, red & gold.

Mitch is ready, so Dan tells him go for it. Mitch pulls the plunger & fires the big ball up. The crowd is yellin & standin up, some of them on their chairs. Loud music's coming out of the speakers & the Machine.

Now, a long time ago I taught Mitch the whole key to pinball. It's how you can shake a pinball game a little without tiltin it. Not to cheat, exactly—just to edge the ball over to your flipper or make it go where you want. So I know Mitch can play, I'm not worryin about that. I'm not even thinkin about that shock of pain he might get. Just the million bucks he wins if he can turn that sucker over. They'd put him on the front of the *Sun-Times* for that.

He smacks the ball up through the Rainbow Chute first thing. Hundred thousand points, just like that. The fans love it, seein a guy who can really play. They're jumpin around & makin enough noise for a football game. The ball slides over to Mitch's left flipper. He knocks down all the Pot-o-Gold targets, 1-2-3-4. The ball comes straight back to his flipper. He catches it & holds it there. He's gettin the feel of those big flipper buttons on the front of the Machine. No problem. He makes a little pass over to his right flipper. *Bing-bing-bing*—the Machine's countin up the points.

Back through the Chute—wham!

Hundred thousand points. The fans are startin to think maybe he can do it. They're clappin & callin out his name.

But then he misses one a little bit. Maybe he heard them. The ball slides down towards the Black Hole & rims all the way around. It comes out too slow & touches the sidewall, which is slanted to send the ball out, right between the flippers. Here it comes—straight down the pipe. The fans think it's all over. But Mitch gives the front of the Machine a little shove & just *tips* the ball off his right flipper, over to the left one. Crowd yells like there's no tomorrow. They never seen anything like it. Mitch has sweat comin off his forehead, drip-

*Mitch jumps back.
The eyes in the
machine are real
red now. Mitch
can't get his
hands off those
flipper buttons.
Something's real
wrong.*

pin down his chin. He holds the ball on that left flipper, restin for a second. Now Dan & all these folks know they got somebody who can really play this game. Maybe even the Machine sorta knows. That big face in the backglass is lookin meaner than ever. Mitch fires the ball up through a spinnin target. Sends that target *whirlin*—500 points for every spin, & the points are goin up on the scoreboard faster than you can watch.

He's up over 700,000 when the ball comes back through the Chute. But it looks like it's about to kiss off that same spot on the sidewall & go straight out. I just hold my breath, but what does Mitch do but tip the ball with his right flipper, let it hit the left one & come back to the right—where he catches it & holds it.

Nobody says a thing. Dan's just watchin. He can't believe it. The crowd's all quiet now, while Mitch just stands there holdin the ball on that right flipper for a long time. He's got 795,000.

Whack! He knocks it off a dollar-sign target on the sidewall. Now he's got everything in the whole playfield lit up. The scoreboard's countin it up, music

is bangin out of the Machine, & Mitch is sweatin down his neck. I never saw anything as good as Mitch kickin the hell out of this big Machine. His jaw is all hard & his eyes look tough, like some linebacker runnin 50 miles an hour across the field to knock some guy up in the air.

He rams it up the Chute, & here it comes back out the other side. The ball's going so fast it flies half the way. *Smack*—back off 3 more bumpers. The scoreboard's flippin past 900,000 & 920,000 so fast I figure Mitch could just take his hands away & *coast* right over the top.

Then somethin weird happens. The ball just takes a hitch. That's the only way I can think of to say it. Takes a hitch. It jumps off the sidewall, hits a bumper & comes back across. But then it just dies. It touches a corner of one of the knocked-down Pot-o-Gold targets, rims around the Black Hole & drops in.

A couple of people in the crowd go "Awww," but most of them just stay quiet. Mitch can't figure it out. He gives the Machine a shake & yells "No way!" I bet the TV guys bleeped out the rest, because he's got 998,000 & here comes the pain.

I knew right off it was a 10 on their scale. I seen Mitch cut his thumb half open on a sheet of aluminum & he didn't say a word. Now his head jumps back & his shoulders are all bunched up. The eyes in the Machine are real red now, sendin out the pain. Mitch can't get his hands off those flipper buttons. Somethin's real wrong. They never figured on havin the pain be this bad. I can see Mitch's fingers curled up, stuck to those flipper buttons by the electricity. With his right foot he's kickin the Machine, knockin on the front of the cabinet with his knees. Dan is really scared. "Turn it off!" he's yellin at the guys backstage. But nobody turns it off. The eyes in the backglass just stay red. The music keeps comin out of the Machine, the loudest thing in the world. I think I never saw anything look so mad at gettin beat as that Machine.

But Mitch hates gettin beat, too. He's yellin stuff right at the eyes, like he's talkin to the Machine. The ball's still sittin there in the Black Hole. You can see the top of it, gleamin bright silver. Dan runs down to Mitch, but acts like he's scared to touch him.

Now Mitch is startin to shake all over. It's gettin real serious & I'm standin up on my chair like everybody else, screamin. Except what am I doin here? I got a straight line to Mitch.

Now I know how those ballplayers feel in a slo-motion replay. All the way

up to the set I'm runnin over the situation in my mind. A big current of electricity will make you stick to it. If you grab a guy who's touchin a live wire, you won't be able to let go. You're just another part of the circuit. I'm thinkin all this while Dan is standin there squeezin his hands & the crowd is yellin like they'll die if it's not over soon. I'm runnin to the side a little so I can get a better line on Mitch. The ON THE AIR sign is blinkin & the music from the Machine is pickin up speed.

I'm thinkin I'm Butkus in his prime, droppin my shoulder so I can knock Mitch right out of there. Then all the sound goes off, far as I can tell. It's like I'm underwater. I know I'm goin fast & there's Mitch, & he's fillin up my whole field of view, but I can't quite hit him yet. You could live a million years if it was like that all the time.

Then I hit Mitch & he goes flyin. My feet feel like they're burnin up & then I guess I black out for a second. Because the next thing is when I open my eyes. There's Mitch. A little bit of his jacket cuff's burned off. He's got his eyes closed.

Dan is kneelin down next to Mitch, reachin out a finger to touch him, like

when you touch a hot turkey in the oven. All Dan's orange makeup is runnin down on his suit. He looks over at me & asks me where I'm from.

THEY NEVER PUT THE LAST PART OF THAT show on TV. It was too violent. But Mitch was on the front of the *Sun-Times* after all. CHICAGO MAN FRIES IN QUIZ SHOW MISHAP, it said. There was a fuzzy picture of him lyin there by the Machine.

Trish hit the show with a big lawsuit & they gave her a million dollars so it wouldn't go into a trial. So she's doin good for money now, but she still misses Mitch, just like I do. We started seeing each other after a while. Now she says maybe we should think about gettin married, but I don't know. I don't know if that would make Mitch happy or mad. But supposing we did, I could try & take good care of her & little Mitch. He's a good kid & he could use a dad. So probably we will think about it.

I'm the floor supervisor at work now. Eddie & Danny & Espinosa come over to my house for poker on Tuesday nights. We don't talk about Mitch a lot, but we're thinkin about him half the time.

The Million Dollar Pain & Gain Machine was on tonight. Me & Trish watched it. It's more of a hit than ever. The thing about that show is what happened the week after Mitch was on. That Machine got so it didn't mind losin at all. Let me tell you, that was when you wanted to be on. For a whole week, everybody won. Trish said it was just a big PR move. I said that was okay with me. At least there's 5 millionaires out there who would be hoppin around with electric shock if not for Mitch. That's not the same as him & me lyin on the beach in Hawaii, but it's somethin.

It seems like more people have been winnin, ever since that week. Sittin there with Trish, I saw a guy win the million bucks. He went wild & jumped around, & Dan acted real happy somebody won the big prize.

I told Trish I thought maybe Mitch was in there. I saw somethin familiar sometimes in those big eyes in the backglass, like Mitch was back behind there, grinnin at us. Trish laughed at me like I was nuts or somethin when I told her. But the next time the show came on, we popped open a couple of Early Times & drank a toast to Omniscent Mitch—the man who beat the Big Machine. ■

SUBIAN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 57

thrill of discovery, another bit of information). Noticed suddenly that the way was open into the vacant lot and that the fire escape crawling up the side of the building to that same third-floor window was within reach.

IRVING CROUCHED LOW IN THE RAIN ON the cat-rust-dust-garbage-smelling fire escape and peered in through the torn window blind at his quarry. Mr. Subian moved quietly about the room, now here, now there, sometimes in Irving's line of vision, sometimes not. He washed his hands at the rusty sink in the corner and dried them on a dish towel, which he replaced neatly folded on the rack. He moved out of Irving's line of vision to the closet, but when he returned he was much the same, less coat and hat. He stood before the dresser mirror to remove his tie, then his shirt, then his undershirt, all folded neatly and laid on the bed.

Mr. Subian stood for several moments before the mirror, looking at his reflection, as Irving studied him through the blind. Mr. Subian's body

was very thin, but lean and hard and unwrinkled. He leaned forward, and studied his own eyes in the mirror intently, for a long time. And then he sighed.

It was a long, deep, heartfelt, private sigh; it was a sigh of loneliness, of having been long passed by, of having seen hopes gone, friends gone, admirers gone, nothing left. It was a sigh of all loneliness and despair, and Irving, peeping in from the rain-soaked darkness, was embarrassed, and ashamed. Irving Cholnocky was a man who knew something of loneliness and despair. His every decent urge was to go, and his nerves, his bones, ached to turn away, to creep and spy no more. But he stayed. He stayed, crouched and peeping like a damp rat.

And then Mr. Subian reached with both hands behind his head, to the nape of his neck, with the easy sure motion of long practice, such as a woman might use to unclasp a necklace, and with a quick up-and-over motion he took off his head.

Irving screamed, long and loud and spit-gurgling into the rainy night. Not because Mr. Subian had taken off his head, and now held in his right hand the shell-mask of the lean, intense face Irving had studied for so many weeks, limp as an exploded balloon.

No time for that; Irving screamed at the true head which now topped the shoulders of Mr. Subian, the head no longer masked, impossibly large, impossibly dark, lean and canine, furred and snouted, animal face, the bright eyes, the fangs, the sharp, upstanding, pointed ears. Impossible as it was, it was a face Irving, the time-waster, the museum-goer, knew, and recognized.

Anubis. The jackal-headed.

The Lord of the Dead.

Irving screamed, and Anubis turned, knew himself to be spied upon, and godhead still, his strength returned with his anger. Irving saw him come, saw him fill the window. Saw him reach. Felt his touch.

SO NOW IRVING IS GONE. IRVING CHOLNOCKY is dead; that has been well seen to. The spaces he would have fleetingly and carelessly occupied will now be empty, or occupied by someone else. A few slim files will yellow in various government file drawers. Brophy's revenues will dip slightly, imperceptibly even to Brophy. There will be one less admirer around Ripley's table.

Irving did not find God. (God was in Los Angeles, at the time, as it happened.) But Irving did find a god, after all. He did pretty well, all things considered. Better than most of us. ■

DEATH

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"You are lying," he said, as if trying to convince himself. "You made it all up."

Slowly he rose to his feet. He stood in front of her. She saw his wrinkled face and his white hair and the look in his eyes. He looked like a stranger, like someone she did not want to meet.

"He would not have had you," insisted the old man. "I know their ways and you had nothing he would have wanted; not power, not beauty."

"Oh, but he did." She watched his face now and the desire burned in her to put her mark upon him and she felt a sudden strength. "But I did not know that you cared? Now you must know how I felt each night you were gone."

In the telling, it became real even to her, this imaginary night of long ago.

"I still say you lie." But he was uncertain. "And even if you found him, even if you had night-seeing eyes to see the spirit being, he wouldn't have wanted you. They have eyes only for great power or great beauty."

"But I was beautiful that night," she said.

"You were always ugly."

"To you, perhaps," said the old woman. "But I knew how to make my-

self pretty for him. His eyes and hands told me a thousand times that I was beautiful."

"You are out of your mind. Approaching death, that terrible bird I see on your shoulder, hungry and shriveled, has driven you crazy," said the old man, casting about for something, for some kind of explanation, for it was never her way to lie. Never. He considered this, wanting to convince himself it was true before he believed her completely but there was no madness in her manner or speech.

"You were drunk. You dreamed it. It did not happen, you only think it happened," he said.

She shook her head. "One night, if it had only been one night, then yes, I could have been drunk. One night even that I could have dreamed. But it was many nights, a hundred, a thousand, how many I don't know, for we were both hungry in the dark. Like that, drunk or dreaming, it is only possible that it happened."

And then for the first time in a life without tears, the old man wept.

She was silent, not looking at him.

He felt something breaking inside himself, shattering into anguished fragments. Dreams rose and died and memories of nights long ago were like spears through his heart.

In a few words, a lifetime of mastery, of dancing unaffected above the shallow things of everyone else's lives, was shattered. Like an eagle with an arrow through its wings, he fell from the sky and her earth which had never been his came rushing up to meet him.

Now he did not know who he was any more.

She said nothing, continued only to not look at him. He touched her arm with one trembling hand but she seemed not to notice.

"What are you thinking about? Do you hear what I say? Answer me!" He cried, because for the first time he felt he did not know what was in her mind. "What are you thinking about?"

"About him," she said and the lie was bigger and easier on her tongue. "And I shall think of him until the end. He was all I had."

The old man reeled back as if struck.

"You make it up. You want to frighten me!"

"Why should I frighten you?" Her voice was serene, unconcerned. "We both did what we wanted to do."

"You were mine. Mine!" said the old man, and the tears fell with each word.

"Once . . . but not only yours," she said.

Death came into the old man, creeping outward from the heart. He had time for only a few words.

"You've ruined me."

He slipped to the floor, no longer able to stand up.

"Now I am afraid of death. Afraid! Always I thought I understood the living. That I saw into their hearts and knew all that was to be known. But now, I know I have never known you, never known the secrets of your heart! I never had mastery over you. Never! Never mastery over you who I thought to be life itself. And now I am ruined. Ruined! For if I could not conquer life, then death will certainly destroy me."

He looked up into her eyes and saw the answer.

"Yes," she said and it was the most terrible word he had ever heard in his life and it was the last word.

She watched in the dark, waiting to die beside him as soon as she must and felt young, almost reborn. She was like a woman newly in love, that first sweet love that is sweetest of all. He was hers now. He died belonging to her and to no one else, not to himself, or to the spirits of the far country.

She waited for death happily now, for the heart of woman is only happy when it owns all that it has conquered.

And her magic had been so strong, that she had conquered the world. ■



"I see that there's now enough evidence available for a person to believe anything that he, or she, wants to believe."

M. E. Wright

SCREEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

[Jones] indulging us in the above fantasy by sitting in a field surrounded by bovines and assuring us that his Chocolate Chums are still as good as they were when his father and grandfather and so on made them. But somehow we don't believe him, and when we join him in his office and see him cringing under the verbal lash of Jonathan Pryce, playing the evil representative of the ghastly corporation (Anglo Foods and Haulage) which has bought him and his company lock, stock, barrel and soul, we know that Chumley's is no longer even slightly interested in making candy; only in making money.

Enter into this environment a young, ambitious ninny played by Tyler Butterworth (an actor who has got to play Colonel Oliver North when they make the IranScam movie as he resembles him perfectly), who loses his way heading for his new job at the candy factory, stumbles into the high-tech production line (entirely computerized, of course, with not a peasant costume in sight), and, through a slight miscalculation, sends several workmen to their death in a vatful of a boiling brown substance (the Pryce character has made it clear to us by now that the stuff is not chocolate), whence they are poured into grinders and mixers, blended smoothly with other ingredients, and then rolled off on conveyor belts to sorting devices and neatly packaged in pretty little boxes.

The young man hysterically tries to stop all this but fails. At first his new employers are very angry with him, but when they discover that the candies containing the workmen are the only ones anybody likes (without the addition of human flesh, it seems, Chumley's Chocolates, as improved by Anglo Foods and Haulage, are inedible), they cleverly instruct the young man to keep up the good work and put him in charge of procuring the secret ingredient—corpses.

Of course this basic plot is carefully cluttered with a multitude of complications, since it's that kind of a comedy. The best of these complications is a Maltese widow who teaches the Tango and who is terrifyingly sexy and who is played very amusingly by Vanessa Redgrave. (Melina Mercouri will never speak to her again!) Ms. Redgrave is come upon by Mr. Butterworth in his attempts to mollify the survivors of the workmen he originally killed, and she

scoops him up at once, delighted at the prospect of young flesh, and forces him not only into regular service, but even into buying the two of them a brand-new bed to perform those services on.

Other complications are the little problems which inevitably arise if you have to illegally acquire at least five dead bodies each and every day. There is a particularly nice scene involving a medical examiner and Pryce negotiating the price-per-pound over the tagged toe of a Secret Ingredient lying on its slab. Then, of course, Butterworth also has a nice girl with whom he is really in love but is just too exhausted to do much about, thanks to the Maltese widow.

Though it falters, I enjoyed Con-

course, the young innocent's horror at all the vile, grotesque things he has to do in order to succeed in respectable commerce, and it is gotten across nicely enough. The second part of the joke is the considerably worse disillusionment which comes to him with his slowly dawning realization that though the grown-ups around him may agree with him that his ghastly doings may be a somewhat unpleasant duty, they, all of them, "know" that those doings are necessary and practical if one wishes to get ahead in the world as humanity has built it, and that this sort of behavior, though admittedly a bit grim, is simply common sense.

This second part of the joke is very



BLAND AMBITION: Tyler Butterworth bites off more than he can chew.

suming *Passions* but, as with *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, I felt the script could have used a little more work (actually a lot more work). Some of the jokes went on a very long time without anything new actually happening and gave the distinct impression of being squeezed dry when they needn't have been. Some didn't go on far enough and left a number of very promising sprouting concepts completely in the lurch. But, more importantly, the core joke, the one I thought the whole film was clearly leading up to, is somehow or other abandoned in the end. I'm not sure if they shied away from it out of fear, or whether they didn't realize they'd made it in the first place.

The first part of the joke is, of

nice introduced when the young man blurts out a confession of his hideous activities to his nice young girl and is appalled when she reacts with a sweet understanding of his difficulties, but really sees nothing fundamentally wrong with them. I was sorry to see the script veer away from that notion (perhaps, as I say, not even notice it) and finally drop it altogether.

The movie would have made a lot more sense if they'd stuck to their comic guns, and—much more importantly to a project of this kind—it could have led up to a very funny and effective finish instead of doing what it actually does, which is, most unfortunately, to taper down to a slow petering out and end with a weakish sputter of tiny gags. ■

HOLLYWOOD GRAPEVINE

CRAIG MILLER

SOMETIMES ONE HAS TO MARVEL AT THE American system of jurisprudence. Several months ago, in this column, I discussed the *Twilight Zone: The Motion Picture* trial. John Landis, the film's director, along with four other men, were on trial for the wrongful deaths of actor Vic Morrow and two children who were killed during the making of the film. The jury acquitted Landis and the others, saying that the deaths, while tragic, were accidental, and that no one was to blame.

Rush to Judgement

Now, several books are being published about the case. One of them, *Outrageous Conduct: Art, Ego, and the Twilight Zone Case*, by Stephen Farber and Marc Green, is a condemnation of Landis. In it, the authors say that Landis was responsible for the deaths. They claim to have done extensive research and interviews in coming up with their decision, but it seems that they made little effort to speak with John Landis or the other men involved. The April issue of *Premiere* magazine contains a condensation of their book. At the end of the article there is a notice saying that John Landis and Warner Bros. (the studio that produced the movie) declined to comment. I spoke with John Landis, and he says that they never made contact with him in any way.

It's unfortunate the jury had to sit through ten months of sworn testimony from everyone involved when they could simply have asked Farber and Green for the answer. (Perhaps I missed reading the paper the day the United States changed its system of justice, the one that says a jury decides on the in-



John Landis: Convicted by the press?

nocence or guilt of an individual.)

Farber and Green, however, can say what they want about Landis with impunity. Landis is a public figure, a status which denies him certain privacies. Under our system of freedom of speech, no matter what misinformation is written, the object of that misinformation has to prove it's a lie, prove it was said with malicious intent, and prove he or she was professionally damaged by the lie. In this case, since

Landis is still working (he's currently directing Eddie Murphy's new comedy), it's presumed there was no damage to his career; so Farber and Green are safe from repercussions. I wouldn't for a moment want to change our laws on freedom of speech, but it would be nice if writers would act responsibly.

Farber and Green should pay heed to the Roman Emperor Julian. A provincial governor was put on trial for embezzlement, a charge he strongly de-

nied. During the trial, his testimony could not be disproven. Eventually, the judge, irritated by the absence of proof, turned to Julian and demanded, "Can anyone ever be proved guilty if it is enough just to deny the charge?" Julian replied: "Can anyone be proved innocent if it is enough just to accuse him?"

Strike Two

The Writers Guild of America (WGA) — of which I am a member — is on strike at this writing, and from here it looks likely we'll still be on strike when this sees print.

The Association of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) have put forward a proposal for a new contract that most writers found unacceptable. (Ninety-seven percent of the WGA membership voted to reject the proposal when it was offered in March.)

But what are the writers objecting to? Aren't they already being paid an awful lot of money? Well, yes, television writers are paid a good deal of money for the fruits of their labors. Under last year's contract, the writer of an hour-long show received \$17,134, plus residuals. And it probably only took a couple of weeks to write the script.

That works out to over eighty-five hundred bucks a week. Not bad. Unfortunately, writers don't earn that every week. Or even every other week. There are over nine thousand members of the WGA. There aren't nine thousand episodes to be written. It's only a small percentage of the Guild members who actually get to write even a single episode of any show during a given year. The streets of Hollywood aren't paved with gold.

Residuals are the monies paid to writers (and directors, actors, etc.) each time the show is run after its original airing. Because producers earn money each time a given episode is broadcast, the WGA contract holds that the writer should share in those profits. The same holds true for the Directors Guild of America and Screen Actors Guild contracts.

Among the things the AMPTP asked for with the new contract proposal was a lowering of the amount of those residuals. The claim was made that hour-long dramatic shows were a drag on the market. No one wanted to see them. The producers say they have a list of over one hundred seventy shows that they haven't been able to sell into the syndication market. And the reason they haven't been able to sell them, the producers claim, is because of the large amount of money they have to pay the writers in residuals. If the writers would

only agree to a new formula based on percentages of revenues, the producers could sell the shows and everyone could make money. In fact, under some circumstances, residuals would increase.

Sounds nice. However, when the WGA examined the list of unsold series, all but ten of the shows were what's known in the industry as "busted" series. They didn't have enough episodes for the syndication market. Some ran as few as five or six episodes. Writers could give up one hundred percent of their residuals and the producers would still be unable to sell them into syndication. The WGA offered a compromise. The old residual formula would stand except for the ten shows on that list. For those series, the proposed formula would be used. If it worked, then the WGA would be willing to discuss making the change across the board. The producers were unwilling to accept the compromise.

There was also a suggestion by the producers (since dropped) that writers who hadn't sold a script to a particular type of show (for example, situation comedies or action-adventure shows) would be paid forty percent of the contractual minimum fee.

This is a time of record profits for the producers. Michael Eisner, president of Walt Disney Studios, had earnings of over twenty-three million dollars in 1987. His salary alone would pay all of the residuals to all of the writers.

There are a lot of different points under discussion for the WGA contract. Some are about health benefits. Most of them are about money. But that's okay. Making good films and television shows is an art. But it's also a business. And the writers — the people without whom there is nothing to film — have a right to share in the enormous profits being made by the producers. ■



WADE DAVIS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

shaman [sorcerer or priest] experiences when he takes a substance toward which he has no negative connotations at all. He may have a certain awe for it, but it's part of the very fabric of his beliefs to indulge in that practice. Knowing that he is going to interpret a bizarre collage of stimuli, he will see into that experience things we could never see.

WIATER: Have you experienced such things?

DAVIS: [Laughs.] There have been many, many places I've been, and many, many experiences I've had that would probably be beyond the imaginings of most Americans. But the really profound ones are those that I don't tell anyone about, though such experiences can happen to anyone who goes out into the wilderness and just wanders. . . . I've had a lot of wonderful experiences with animals, and wonderful experiences with *shamans*, and had extraordinary experiences with my own self.

WIATER: This may seem like an off-the-wall question, but for years there have been reports in the media of gigantic serpents and perhaps even living dinosaurs roaming about the Amazon. Do you think there's any truth in them?

DAVIS: People who don't know the nature of the wild lands of the Earth have always imagined as formidable the great expanse that is out there. But those who go there and love it don't see it as empty or foreboding at all. You don't have to go there seeking mythical creatures, because the creatures that we know are there are more wondrous in reality than anything we can imagine. In other words, there are no secret monsters in the Amazon. The great, fantastic animals that are there are the animals that we already know.

On the other hand, there are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of species of insects and fish and reptiles that remain to be discovered. I know of an ichthyologist who discovered four hundred new species of fish. Every time a botanist goes down to the Amazon, he brings back new species of plant. In this aspect, it truly is a world that has yet to be explored, at least from a biological point of view.

WIATER: It now seems that "civilization" is encroaching daily on even the last of the remaining "wild lands" of this planet at an ever-increasing rate.

DAVIS: The tragedy is that they are cutting down acres upon acres of forest containing creatures that have never been seen by man! So it's really not a question of finding "unexplored lands." The point is to embrace—and preserve—the beauty and the power of the wilderness we have. What is it about the wilderness that we need? What is it that we lose when we give it up? What does it mean biologically, spiritually, and psychologically to lose all the wilderness of the Earth?

WIATER: Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the eventual fate of the wild parts of our planet?

DAVIS: Well, it's tough not to be pessimistic about the impact that humans have had and are having on the planet. Still, you

have to do what you can to try to counter that, because all our efforts to better ourselves have been at the expense of the Earth, which is our very Mother, our "matriarch system." The Earth gives us breath, the Earth gives us life. The Earth allows us to sleep and dream. To ignore the other creatures, to pretend that we are apart from the other creatures in any way is a fundamental flaw of our thinking. I don't feel in any way that man is more important than any other species. On the contrary, I think we're all equally important. Every time we've concentrated solely on bettering the position of man, we haven't come out very well. Whenever you neglect nature, you end up cutting your own throat. I can't think of any animal that will eat itself out of its own home—but in effect that's what we're doing.

WIATER: Where do you go from here? What part do you hope to play in reversing that process?

DAVIS: I have a number of projects I'm working on right now, in North, Central, and South America. I plan, God willing, to spend my entire life writing, and making films, and going from place to place filling my eyes with wonder on this incredible

Earth and reporting on it. You see, I feel that being alive is not something I take for granted. It's a very precious gift, which is why I move and act so fast, and want to do as much as I can in one life.

I plan to continue to travel around the world, speaking about these issues in an enthusiastic way and trying to act as a teacher—to pass on what I learn to other people so that they can share in my own exhilaration and thrill of being alive.

WIATER: But the biggest "adventure" most Americans experience is getting through the day. It's a victory just to survive rush-hour traffic without getting stampeded. What do you say to the rest of us who will never come anywhere near your range of experiences?

DAVIS: Look, there are wonderful and simple victories in everyday life. It would really be a mistake to look at my life and draw comparisons to other people's lives and say one is better than the other. Everybody doesn't need to be going out on an "adventure." I think everyone in their own corner of the planet has to be doing their own little ritual prayer for the betterment of all peoples and all things. Even if that person is just victorious in finding a parking space, as long as he or she looks up at the stars that morning or that night and remembers where they are, and remembers that they'll be dead at some time, and that they came from somewhere, and that they're going somewhere, it's still a victory.

If everybody could just visualize in their mind's eye those photographs of the planet Earth that the astronauts were able to bring back, if they could just wake up in the morning and just think of that, they'd realize how precious life is. When you think of this golden pearl of a planet floating in a sea of clouds, against that vast emptiness, and remember that all that we know of any other planet within who knows how many light-years of Earth, is that there's no life on any of them besides ours—that's a pretty amazing concept; one I think we should try to remember every day of our lives. ■

"One ubiquitous human appetite is to escape the everyday reality of normal perception.

The means to do that are many. It can be prayer, it can be meditation, it can be enduring extremes of heat and cold. Some cultures achieve it through the use of drugs."

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the wilds of rural New York. Strange things start to happen. The daughter learns about supernatural seduction. The twins encounter an old footbridge that seems to house a creature terribly like a troll—or something; even less so. The boys also meet Barney Doyle, the nice old Irish handyman who knows more than he's letting on.

It seems that survivors of *Faerie* itself are lurking about the countryside. The Wild Hunt rides the local woods at night. And there is a plot afoot that has to do with critical information hidden in the Hastings home. To complicate matters even more, the nastiest of the local *Faerie* folk covets the twins.

This is the sort of moderately predictable material that can fare well in the hands of a Thomas Tryon. Raymond Feist's fingers are a bit less adroit. Familiar story materials can be made fresh again through inspired writing. Sadly, the prose in *Faerie Tale* is not up to that, other than a few evocative scenes such as the sequence toward the end in which one twin explores the faerieland inside Erl King Hill. Even sadder, the characters tend to the flatly stereotypical. The quality of the telling simply does not sustain the length of the book.

Author Feist is generally a much more accomplished entertainer. But he cannot seem to infuse *Faerie Tale* with sufficient energy to bring it to life.

Eeyaaow!

A friend of mine borrowed my copy of John Skipp and Craig Spector's *The Scream* (Bantam, \$3.95, 422 pp., ISBN 0-553-26798-1) and, after reading a couple score pages, remarked, "Pretty froggin' neat, man! Heavy-metal zombies!" There are times when I wish I could be that concise. But then my friend wasn't wholly accurate, as she's presumably found out after venturing through a few hundred more pages. I haven't gotten my book back yet. To write this review, I've had to buy another copy. No matter. It's all more royalties for the young fellers, Skipp and Spector, and a left-handed testimonial that a lot of folks will find their fourth collaborative novel compulsively readable.

Their debut novel, *The Light at the End*, held a lot of manic fun, played off some sharp edges, but was excessively wordy. This epic of a street-punk urban vampire pursued by his old friends woke up a substantial audience of jaded horror readers. Then came the novelization of *Fright Night*; it was good of its

kind. The third book, *The Cleanup*, lost some of the pair's sharpness, but retained their boundless enthusiasm for logorrhea. *The Scream* is back in the groove. The book doesn't always successfully balance its huge catalogue of characters and incident, but when it works, it works very well indeed and speaks clearly through pared-down language.

The story itself is about the stuff of parental nightmares. The eponymous metal band of *The Scream* is precisely

is customary in any novel attempting best-seller status, is huge.

The good guys are good. The bad guys are horrid. Most of what subtlety is here comes in some skillfully drawn subplots involving televangelists and right-to-lifers.

It all funnels down to an Altamont to end all Altamonts. I couldn't help drawing a few parallels between Skipp and Spector's opus and George R.R. Martin's *The Armageddon Rag* from a few years ago. Where I felt the Martin novel got a bit soft at the end, and didn't fully face up to the ending every event prior had suggested, *The Scream* hangs in tougher.

It's a solid two hours of thriller entertainment. As a bonus, the stylish red-on-black stepback cover protects a miniature foldout four-sheet poster suitable for mounting. Probably added another twenty-two cents to the unit cost. Eeyaaow!

Short Takes

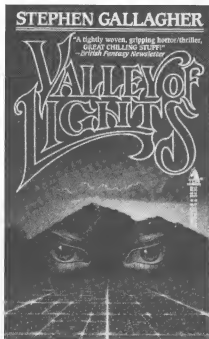
A less trumpeted, but more rewarding dark fantasy novel is Stephen Gallagher's *Valley of Lights* (Tor, \$3.95, 276 pp., ISBN 0-812-51832-2). There's nothing on the surface to suggest that this is any different from its similarly packaged fellows on the supermarket paperback racks. A close inspection of the blurbs and copyright page reveals that the novel was first published in Great Britain. This is only odd in that the book appears thoroughly American and is set in Phoenix.

Whatever its origin, *Valley of Lights* is a modest thriller that pays off. Alex Volchak, a widowed Phoenix homicide cop, investigates the peculiar situation of a sleazy motel room containing a trio of brain-dead occupants. The victims are of various races and backgrounds, with nothing to link them other than their flat EEGs.

Like any good detective, Volchak wants to know more. What he discovers is an ancient creature that exists solely as a psychic parasite and controller, switching from body to body like a TV addict flipping the channel selector. The entity, functionally immortal, is not amused to discover Volchak on its trail.

Author Gallagher does a pretty fair job of setting a gritty scene with some fleshed-out characters, including not only the detective, but also his neighbor/prospective girlfriend and her young daughter.

The we-are-property plot, in the hands of a decent writer, seems always to be good for another run-through. Stephen Gallagher appears to be a relatively new novelist. His enthusiasm car-



the sort of group that justifies Tipper Gore's whole existence. The *Scream*'s fans are a bit more hard-core than any of the after-school punkers you see hanging out in malls. Oh, yes. *Screamers* are the fans who always sit behind you at rock concerts. They scream "EYAAOW!" in your ear at inappropriate moments. They smell terrible, as if they are ... dead. If they catch you alone afterward in the parking lot, they're liable to take things from you. Like your eyes.

The *Scream* is planning something sinister for a huge anti-censorship benefit concert. After that, they've really got some nasty plans hidden up their demonic sleeves. Arrayed against them are such as Viet vet and rock star, Jake Hamer. I'm not sure if Jake has a specific real-life prototype, but he reminded me of Bob Seger. Then there's his new wife Rachel and their infant daughter. There's his rebellious teenage son, Ted. There is Jesse Molloy, proto-cyberpunk experimenter with esoteric electronic/musical interfaces, impregnated by Jake's lead guitarist. And so on. The cast, as

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ries *Valley of Lights* through the treacherous terrain of an occasionally tortured plot. In any case, the book both entertains and kindles the reader's enthusiasm for whatever might be Gallagher's next novel.

A year doesn't go by anymore when the science fiction field doesn't ritually proffer the name of a new writer who's more equal than his or her colleagues. That is to say, there always seems to be a Hot New Writer. You know the sort I mean—the Gibsons, the Fowlers, the Shepards. This year the name seems to be McDonald. Ian McDonald has his first two books out simultaneously, a novel called *Desolation Road* (Bantam Spectra, \$3.95, 355 pp., ISBN 0-553-27057-5) and a story collection entitled *Empire Dreams* (Bantam Spectra, \$3.50, 220 pp., ISBN 0-553-27180-6).

Ian McDonald has been publishing fiction only since 1982, debuting in the British magazine, *Extro*. Here in America, his short stories have appeared in both *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* and *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, though mainly in the latter. A Briton by birth, McDonald has lived in Northern Ireland for more than two decades.

I'm not going to spend any time at all rhapsodizing about the joys of *Desolation Road*, a skewed look, something like Bradbury on acid, at a future Terraformed Mars. It's a good book, probably bound for a Philip K. Dick Award nomination, that doesn't possess quite enough energy to fully support the immense cast and multiplicity of plot-lines. It's quirky and distinctively written, and should go on your bookstore shopping list many notches above the latest entry in any assembly-line fantasy series you can name.

Mainly I'm saying little about *Desolation Road* because it's already garnering lots of good reviews and can be found in just about every bookstore. What concerns me more right now is the novel's poor-relation companion volume, *Empire Dreams*. Hardly any general bookstores—certainly few of the chains—ordered this one. At present in sf, single-author story collections are literary stepchildren, orphans, unloved and unpromoted victims of self-fulfilling prophecies of commercial doom.

Too bad. *Empire Dreams* qualifies for—and deserves—its own nomination for the Phil Dick Award. There are ten stories here, of which four originally appeared in *Asimov's Magazine*. The

best-known (already reprinted in the new collection of sf war stories, *Space Fighters*) is the title piece. "Empire Dreams" starts out with the old Spinrad "Carcinoma Angels" idea of a patient using space-opera interior imaging to fight cancer cells, and then angles off at light-speed toward a totally different target. Young Tom is a Belfast boy trapped in his own head, the victim of what the Troubles have done to his father. How he finds his way out is a story that will tear the heart from any but the most



callous reader. McDonald does well at utilizing the contemporary Irish milieu in much the same manner that so many Americans have begun mining Vietnam. Beyond that, he knows also how to use the invocations and rituals of the popular media without actually ripping anything off. "Empire Dreams" is for the eighties what James Tiptree's "Beam Us Home" meant in the sixties.

"The Island of the Dead" is another heart-grabber that portrays an island where technology has enabled the deceased to be recorded and then reassembled holographically for the benefit of their surviving friends and relatives once a year. It is an affecting examination of letting go. "Scenes from a Shadow-play" is a drama of murder—just as *Crime and Punishment* is a potboiler about an axe murderer. "Christian" is the story of a man, a boy, kite-flying, cyborgs, and coming of age. There are six more, all fascinating.

Both stories and novel are challenging. They are must-acquisitions for the adventurous reader. There is fun here, and exuberance, along with a healthy amount of thought. Ian McDonald clearly

loves the language, the way he strings words together reminding me of (in different ways, but each equally appropriate) R. A. Lafferty and Dan Simmons. There's a real care at play. It seems also evident that McDonald is here to stay.

Paeon to Cahan

I want to wrap up with mention of a special treat. No false suspense. It's Cahan Wilson's *Eddy Deco's Last Cap* (Times Books, \$14.95, 213 pp., ISBN 0-8129-1671-9). In most people's minds, Wilson is That Weird Cartoonist, an instantly recognizable member of the pantheon that includes such as Charles Addams and Gary Larson. For years, his monthly single panels brightened *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*; for more years yet, *Playboy* and *The New Yorker*. Yet another distinct audience fondly remembers the enchantingly macabre "Nuts" strip from *The National Lampoon*. We, of course, know him as a gifted reviewer of film. Fewer readers recall that Wilson is also a fine writer of short stories. "The Sea Was Wet As Wet Could Be," for example, is one charmingly horrifying puppy about Lewis Carroll's Walrus and Carpenter. Readers never forget it.

Eddy Deco's Last Cap is something new, a book-length pastiche of hard-boiled detective and pulp science fiction. Unfortunate private dick Eddy Deco gets caught up in the gang-war between competing camps of extraterrestrials haunting the skyscrapers of a city much like Manhattan. There's a fickle secretary, a peculiar "thing" waiting in the hall outside the detective's office, a beautiful girl (of course!), Tong thugs, Mafiosi, a sinister Fat Man in a hearse, a living human brain in a jar, homicidal robotic critters, and a variety of ET monsters, some of which are outright Cthulhuloid.

The story is amusing enough. What's fascinating is how Wilson incorporates his art into the text. The cover states that *Eddy Deco* is "an illustrated mystery." The book isn't illustrated in the customary way, with pictures dropped in, redundantly duplicating what's already there in words. Wilson's illustrations actually dovetail with the text, replacing word-structures such as transitions and appositives. When Wilson depicts something, he then feels no need to describe it with nouns and adjectives.

In the case of Wilson's book, a picture may not be worth a thousand words; but realistically, it's valued at least anywhere from twenty to a few hundred. Find *Eddy Deco* for yourself, and savor it. ■

THE GOULART ARCHIPELAGO

RON GOULART



LONGTIME FOLLOWERS OF MY VARIOUS EFFUSIONS in these pages are probably aware of my abiding interest in dramatic works that have a gloomy mansion as a setting. Back in the February 1985 issue I devoted an entire column to the subject and I've been wondering of late if I ought to turn out an expanded, and even more scholarly, thesis on the topic. At any rate, in the course of my sporadic researches I recently unearthed a novel that seems to be one source of inspiration for the genre.

Old Dark Houses, Part One

Published in 1885, it is aptly titled *The Dark House* and was written by a British chap named G. Manvi le Fenn. Completely forgotten today (which ought to be a lesson to all prolific authors), Fenn was the author of over a hundred mystery, adventure, and boys' novels.

The novel is a classic. It contains just about all the elements which appear in later books, plays, and movies in the category. There is the grim old house itself (at No. 9A, Albemarle Square, London), the gathering of the dead man's relatives (which include a couple of pretty young ladies), a mysterious Hindu servant, strange visitors

from a foreign land and the reading of an odd and unusual will at a few minutes shy of midnight. There's even a crotchety old lawyer who gives a throat-clearing *Hem!* before commencing to read the document. The will stipulates that the deceased must be placed in an iron coffin and bricked up in one of the rooms of the mansion. If that isn't done, the will is null and void. This provides ample motive for a variety of shenanigans, and stimulates an entertaining round of good old-fashioned chicanery and mayhem.

If this last bit of business seems especially familiar, it's because it makes up an essential part of the plot of a 1944 B-movie called *One Body Too Many*, a mystery-comedy starring Bela Lugosi and Jack Haley. Haley, as might be expected, manages to spend some time locked up in the iron coffin himself. And all this probably proves that the ingredients of the "old dark house" genre are ageless — or maybe that the borrowing of plots knows no boundaries.

Old Dark Houses, Part Two

And speaking of "old dark houses," I've recently rediscovered a gem of a film I'd very nearly forgotten about until it appeared

one day behind the "oldies" counter of my local video parlor. Thanks to that admirable invention, the VCR, I've been able to recapture and rerun quite a few of the movies that haunted me in my youth. While some of these retrieved epics are deadly serious, others belong to that hybrid category that mixes comedy with its terrors. Falling into this latter classification are *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein*, *The Cat and the Canary*, and my recent find, *Murder, He Says*.

Paramount released *Murder, He Says* in 1945. It's a mystery-comedy that blends "old dark house" elements with hillbilly slapstick, tossing in murder, hidden loot, an escaped convict, a pair of homicidal twins, and a touch of mad science just to add flavor to the recipe.

The unflappable Fred MacMurray stars as a researcher for a public-opinion poll who's trying to track down a missing colleague who vanished under very suspicious circumstances, indeed. His search leads him to a sinister old mansion out in the boondocks. The shadowy, ramshackle place is inhabited at the moment by a family of mean-minded and avaricious rustics, presided over by Marjorie Main, in a villainous

GOULART

version of her "Ma Kettle" persona.

After falling into, and escaping, their clutches, MacMurray teams up with an attractive damsel in distress, and nearly goes the way of his polltaxing predecessor while helping her unearth some missing bank money.

Although he plays it fairly broadly, indulging in double takes and pratfalls that would make Chevy Chase green with envy, MacMurray's is an ingratiating performance. Helen Walker is fetching as a wronged young woman posing as the wanted bank robber. But it is Marjorie Main who steals the show. She is cunning, sly, rotten to the core and quite appealing. She alternates between obviously false wheedling and drill sergeant bellowing, using a bull-whip to emphasize her points. All in all her performance is a refreshing antidote

to all the sweet mothers Hollywood inflicted on the world, especially during those post-World War II years.

Mabel Paige shines—literally, since they're slowly poisoning her with something that makes her glow in the dark—as the crack-brained and wicked old granny who may know the secret of the missing money's whereabouts. The small and blatantly untrustworthy Porter Hall, who'd been up to no good ever since his debut in *The Thin Man* back in 1934, portrays Main's latest husband. And a hulking actor named Peter Whitney plays twins, each decked out in bib overalls and each nastier and dumber than the other.

The script is by Lou Breslow, whose credits include screenplays for Red Skelton and Abbott & Costello. The manic direction is by George Marshall. A director since the silent days, Marshall worked on Westerns, musicals, and melodramas in the talkies, and worked with W. C. Fields and Laurel & Hardy

as both a director and a walk-on character actor. In 1939, Marshall directed the classic, *Destry Rides Again*, and in 1940, directed Bob Hope in the granddaddy of all "ghostbuster" comedies, *The Ghost Breakers*. In the lesser-known *Murder, He Says*, Marshall's sprightly directorial style keeps the film moving, and even includes an in-joke with a pipe organ that kids his earlier work in *Ghost Breakers*.

The title, by the way, comes from a song by Frank Loesser that was introduced in a 1943 Paramount movie by the hyperactive Betty Hutton. It no doubt inspired the title of the 1962 Margaret Rutherford mystery-comedy *Murder, She Said*, which in turn inspired the creators of television's current *Murder, She Wrote*.

What's Up, Doc?

I recently received an audio cassette in the mail from a young friend of mine named Will Murray. Despite his tender years, Murray is one of our leading authorities on the larger-than-life heroes of the Street & Smith pulp magazines. To my delight, I discovered that Will was involved in putting together a new series of radio plays featuring Lester Dent's legendary Man of Bronze. *The Adventures of Doc Savage* began airing on various National Public Radio stations about three years back. (My car radio is always set, depending on who's driving, to an a/l-news station or tooth-rattling rock, and thus I missed Doc's return to the airwaves entirely.)

Put together by a group of talented professionals calling themselves the Variety Arts Radio Theatre, including scripts by Murray himself, the shows managed to convey the slambang action, wild science and quirky humor of the Lester Dent pulp novels they're based on. Judging by the sampling I heard, this was an excellent recreation of the adventure serials of 1930s and 1940s radio. All I missed was an announcement telling me where to send my box top in order to get my decoder ring.

Right now, your only hope of hearing what I consider a top-notch example of a dying art form is to haunt the classifieds for dealers in radio nostalgia. Or to mount a massive letter-writing campaign urging NPR to bring "Doc" back to the airwaves.

The problem with radio drama, alas, is that, unlike TV, there are no green pastures of reruns and syndication where old programs can live out their golden years, and provide entertainment to new generations of listeners. Somebody oughta do something about that.



HONORABLE MANSION: G. Manville Fenn's *The Dark House* inspired a host of haunted habitats.

LETTERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

meet with the "Great White Father." After a treaty was agreed upon, the Indian leader returned home. Within a short time the provisions of the treaty had been violated. The article said that the Indian leader performed a sacred ritual which had the effect of placing upon future presidents a curse that would last for approximately the next one hundred fifty years; a curse that any man elected to the presidency in a year ending in "0" would die in office. According to the article, this curse was finally fulfilled with the assassination of President Kennedy, and therefore President Reagan will not die in office, as others before him did.

I'm not saying that I adhere to this particular theory, but I do find it an interesting story. If there really was a curse, it definitely falls within the realm of the *Twilight Zone*.

Continue the good work and keep the magazine going, because it is one of those rare places where the reader can enter and browse in a world of imagination and danger without fear of confronting any *real* danger except that from within his or her own mind. It's a welcome reading experience, and there is too little of that in today's culture.

DENNIS A. NAUGLE
Boswell, PA

I WAS VERY IMPRESSED BY ELIZABETH HAND'S story, "Prince of Flowers," your first "TZ First." As a beginning writer and long-time fan of dark fantasy, I am constantly in search of that wonderful creepy tingling sensation that only the best in the genre can provide. I found it (as the old bumper stickers used to say) in "Prince of Flowers." I hope that you will be publishing more by this very talented writer.

CAROL REID
British Columbia, Canada

AN ERROR SURFACED IN YOUR FEBRUARY, 1988, issue. In the short story "The Blimp Hunter," writer J. Noyes Scher supposes that "In a city crammed with eight million people, there was only one direction to shoot with any degree of safety, and that direction was up." Not any more.

Recently a bill was passed in New York City that prevents armed policemen from firing up into the air. Bullets fired upwards have been found to land up to a mile and a half away, embedding themselves into paving stones and rooftops. Scher's hero, Shelby Holcomb, could stand atop the Marriott Marquis Hotel

in Times Square, firing bullet after bullet at passing blimps, never realizing that Radio City Music Hall was being peppered by invisible snipers.

While this may seem a matter of mere giggling, I'd hate to see anyone assume from Scher's story that there is any safe direction to fire a gun in New York—or any other place, for that matter.

DAVID GRIFFITH
New York, NY

I JUST DISCOVERED YOUR MAGAZINE IN AN out-of-state library. I sat down and read

every story. I found horror, humor, and a touch of humanity. Right in the middle of a particularly frightening piece, I was plunged into darkness. The lights had all gone out! No, I had not entered the *Twilight Zone*, although the thought crossed my mind. The library was closing; I had spent the entire day there. Before leaving, I asked the librarian for the subscription card. I don't know of any other magazine I would subscribe to, and enjoy more. Thank you!

D. UTHUR JONES
Hotchkiss, CO



PEOPLE

JAMES H. BURNS

Jeannot Szwarc, director of Somewhere in Time and Supergirl, recalls his work with Rod Serling on Night Gallery.

STUDENTS OF FANTASTIC FILM KNOW DIRECTOR Jeannot Szwarc as the man behind the camera on such films as *Jaws 2*, *Somewhere in Time* (the film version of Richard Matheson's novel *Bid Time Return*), and *Enigma*, regarded by many as his best film. More recently, he directed two less-successful epics, *Supergirl* and the mega-budgeted *Santa Claus—The Movie*. What many film buffs may not know is that Szwarc learned his craft, like his contemporary, Steven Spielberg, in the trench warfare of network television.

Szwarc, a self-proclaimed "film and fantastique fanatic" since adolescence, emigrated from France in the early sixties with the goal of breaking into movies. Although he had worked in France on documentaries and as a production assistant on *Charade*, the only job he could get in Hollywood—after a few years of struggling—was as an assistant at Universal Television. Ultimately, Szwarc worked his way up to associate producer on the Ironside detective series, where he was also given his first chance to direct. Later, he went on to direct episodes of *Kojak* and *Colombo*, installments of the Hallmark Hall of Fame, and several television movies.

Szwarc made his greatest mark at Universal, however, as a director on Rod Serling's *Night Gallery*. Szwarc



Director Jeannot Szwarc

was by far *Night Gallery*'s most prolific director. Beginning with "The Little Black Bag," a segment starring Burgess Meredith based on a classic C. M. Kornbluth science fiction story, Szwarc went on to direct a total of twenty-four episodes before the series was cancelled in 1972. Serling considered the segment one of his favorites, and called the young director "brilliant."

"I loved *Night Gallery*," Szwarc recalls. "It was like home for me. I had a natural affinity for the show." But work on the series was also extremely stressful for everyone involved. Not only was the production schedule bru-

tal, Serling and producer Jack Laird found themselves battling constantly with Universal and NBC executives over the direction of the series.

Nonetheless Szwarc remembers his days working with the series as among the most rewarding of his career.

TZ: What did you enjoy most about working on *Night Gallery*?

SWZARC: The great part was that the show's main crew was like a family. *Night Gallery*'s producer, Jack Laird, put together an incredible lineup: production designer Joe Alves [*Sugarland Express*, *Close Encounters*], the great cinematographer Curly Lyndon, and Burt Astor a terrific production manager who later became a Universal Television vice-president. It always strikes me as remarkable that there were so many talented people teamed on a single program. Not only did *Night Gallery* have those terrific production principals, but John Badham [*War Games*, *Blue Thunder*] did some of his early directing on the show, and even Steven Spielberg—with whom I shared an office—did a segment! That main corps, though, was invaluable, because *Night Gallery* was a cemetery for directors. We had to direct some shows in one-and-a-half to three days. On my episodes, the four of us—Joe, Curly, Burt, and I—would scour the studio looking for interesting ways to use locales, trying to find strange props.... We also had to innovate special effects, because, you have to remember, it was before *Jaws* and the film industry's resulting technical explosion. We did effects that, at the time, nobody was do-



"Night Gallery was a cemetery for directors. We had to direct some shows in one-and-a-half to three days."

ing, some of which had never been done before. For inspiration—in all areas—we'd watch a lot of silent films, Mario Bava pictures, that sort of thing.

Because *Night Gallery* was so grueling, however, I think I wound up doing some of my best work there. Since I'm a fan of the genre, part of the fun was the opportunity to adapt some classic short stories. *Night Gallery* was actually where I first met Richard Matheson, when I directed his two scripts for the show. That was especially nice, because I grew up reading Richard's stuff. In fact, I was very much interested in making a movie of his *A Stir of Echoes*, an excellent novel, but I didn't have enough money during the early seventies to get the rights. Naturally, it was always great to work on Rod Serling's material. In addition to directing some of Rod's segments, I wrote a lot of his intros for the show.

TZ: You've called him "an extraordinary man."

SZWARC: There's no doubt that the guy had a very intense inner life. Rod could be very slick and funny, but he was also very sensitive—not just in his writing, but on a personal basis—which people who knew him may not have always realized. On top of all that, he was a fantastic conversationalist! I found that, to a degree, Serling had a very nineteenth-century approach to fantasy, where the end of the story is really just the beginning of many possibilities.

TZ: According to reports, there was trouble between Serling and Jack Laird.

SZWARC: All I can tell you is that I never saw an open explosion between

the two of them. In truth, Jack deserves a lot of credit for whatever quality *Night Gallery* may have had. Although I've heard the same stories you have, they may have been exaggerated. I mean, at one point or other, we all had arguments, because when you put creative people together, differences will occur. Occasional friction can even be an essential part of the collaborative process. A lot of the conflicts between Rod and Jack, though, may have had to do with Jack's personality, which was eccentric. Jack was a hermit, never leaving his office, surrounded by a marvelous collection of books and silent films. I guess he viewed his job as just being a writer and fixer. Jack had a big sign outside his office, which was hysterical, saying something like, "No, the person inside is not interested in talking to you and doesn't want to hear about your problems." He also had several ex-wives, and was constantly doling out alimony.

At the same time, Jack had an incredible knowledge of films and literature, and could really discuss them. He also did a lot of gutsy things. The network was so petrified over one show I did, "Sins of the Fathers," that I'm not even sure if we ever had official approval. Yet, Jack went to bat for me, and we both wound up sticking our necks out about a mile. Conversely, Jack and Rod's relationship may have been negatively affected by Jack's dealings with the network. It's possible that Laird became a fall guy for NBC, forced to hand their edicts to Serling. Rod, I'm sure, must have felt very frustrated on *Night Gallery*. Although he

had already experienced problems with the censors on *Twilight Zone*, the networks—in the intervening years—had become even more powerful, wildly diminishing television as a vehicle for content. Rod was prevented from doing the straight kind of intellectual things that *Twilight Zone* had sometimes featured.

TZ: Serling's famous line about *Night Gallery* was that NBC and Universal wanted the series to compete with *Mannix* and its ilk not by contrast, but by similarity, highlighting "chases through graveyards."

SZWARC: In many ways, *Night Gallery* was a cursed show. The fact that the series was both an anthology and fantasy confused NBC and Universal. We were virtually cancelled on paper, because even though we only had decent ratings—much of which may have been the result of all our network-imposed format and time-slot changes—we had great demographics. I can remember Rod coming in one day all excited, because he found out that there were *Night Gallery* viewing clubs at Harvard and Yale. Other people were such fans that, long before the days of videocassettes, they were buying bootlegged films of certain episodes! If nothing else, their interest shows that there was a cult for *Night Gallery* that could have been built up. Some sponsors didn't even want *Night Gallery* to be cancelled. The method by which the show ended was a tragedy for all of us who worked on it. In fact, *Night Gallery* could very well be the only series ever taken off the air simply because its studio and network didn't understand it. ■

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THE OTHER SIDE



STAGE FRIGHT

Once upon a time, there was a puppet named Guignol. He was a round-eyed puppet with a face that looked perpetually surprised—as well it should, considering what happened to him.

Little Guignol was the French equivalent of an English puppet, the beloved Punch of "Punch and Judy." And like Punch, the long-suffering Guignol took some whacks to the head that made the splinters fly.

By some accounts, this explains the name of the Grand Guignol Theatre of Paris, a playhouse that specialized in horror shows that were the true precursors of the current wave of graphic horror.

Le Grand Guignol opened in the late nineteenth century, and lasted into the 1960s. The entertainments it offered? Torture and screaming death, ghosts, madness, all manner of cruelty ... this way to your seat.

There were hundreds of one-act plays staged in the Grand Guignol over the years, including some that were played for laughs. But the crowd always got what it came for: at least one act of violence that was done for eye-popping shock value. In fact, there were eyes that *did* pop out, literally, on stage, and fingernails that popped off.

The theater's most prolific writer, André de Lorde, used to hang around insane asylums in search of ideas, and madmen figured into many a night of theatrical gore at the Grand Guignol.

In one story, "The Laboratory of Hallucinations," a madman with a fractured skull performs surgery. In another, a

good doctor perfects a cure for insanity, but he is murdered by two of his patients who could have used a dose of it.

For a time, this sort of bloodletting was so popular that it seeped into cabarets all over Paris. It spattered into England. It spread to America, with the arrival of a touring company from the Grand Guignol in 1923.

Countless stage deaths later, the infamous theater itself died—perhaps worn out from trying to compete with the cruelties of real life.

But the word "guignol" is still with us. Once the comical name of a puppet, it perversely endures as a word to mean a horror show of garish and gruesome intent.

Guignol as a kind of theatrical entertainment is still around, too. George Romero's zombies are creatures of guignol, even if they can't snarl in French. *Re-Animator* is guignol, and so is *Hellraiser*.

And there is still an audience for the spectacle of horror—much the same as the Grand Guignol's audience, except now it's a crowd that buys popcorn.

People outside the Grand Guignol used to worry that such awful shows would be the destruction of civilized society, just as some people still have the same concern about horror movies.

But the world survived the worst of the Grand Guignol ninety years ago. It probably can deal with another sequel to *Friday the 13th*.

—Ron Wolfe

THE OTHER SIDE



PHOTO © 1987 NEW LINE CINEMA

HE-E-E-E-RE'S FREDDY!

With the success of all those *Nightmares on Elm Street* has come celebrity status for the series's anti-hero, Freddy Krueger. The air has been thick lately with news of Freddy's latest ventures. You may already have heard of the album *Freddy's Greatest Hits*, by the Elm Street Group (RIC Records), that was released last year—it featured a song called “Do the Freddy.” But now Krueger has become a ... well, a host!

Not content with invading our nightmares, Freddy offered (and who would dare turn him down) to host a telephone horror-story service from New Line called “Fred-

dy Krueger's Bedtime Tales,” which ran in April of this year. And it's been recently announced that Freddy will host a new horror-anthology TV show in the fall for the Lorimar Production Company. Robert Englund, Freddy's alter ego, will reprise his role on the program.

Alan Spero, the writer/director/producer of the phone service, explains Freddy's newfound popularity as “a combination of humor and horror ... he's sort of the David Letterman of the monster set.” Mr. Spero says that “Freddy's ‘sharp’ wit tends to play off the story and, in a sense, trivialize the horror.” (Spero, you may recall, was also the producer of the

ground-breaking “Horror Phone” line that started the whole trend.)

The gossip vine also has it that Freddy is thinking of writing his autobiography, considering posing for photographer Richard Avedon, and, who knows, he may have his eye on the White House. We could do worse.

For all you Fredrick Fans who can't get enough, there is still some possibility that those phone stories will be “re-run” (try 1-900-600-FRED or 1-900-600-FEAR) but no commitments have been made as of this writing. Let's hope Fred's not upset about that. Like a lot of stars, he's got a temper.

—David W. Dow

BREATH OF LIFE

It's second only to a crucifix in its power to ward off vampires. (It's not bad for fending off blind dates, either.) But now miraculous new powers are claimed for an ancient substance which is powerful enough to prevent blood clots, clear away certain cancer and tumor-causing compounds, plus kill germs, and was once used to treat headaches, worms, dysentery, gangrene, meningitis, cholera, typhus, and bites—all without harmful side effects. Crystals, you say? Ground ginseng, perhaps? Nope. It's garlic.

Garlic's healing properties have long been suspected, from the first Greek Olympic Games (where garlic was eaten as a stimulant), right on down to Louis Pasteur's 1858 discovery that garlic was antibacterial. In 1944 garlic yielded a germicidal chemical called *allicin* which was widely used until penicillin came along.

Today, emphasis is being placed on the study of anti-clotting properties of garlic extracts which inhibit the aggregation of blood cells in a test tube, as well as their anticancer/antitumor properties which may one day lead to a cancer-preventative.

In a recent interview, State University of New York, Albany, chemistry professor Eric Block said, “for twenty years I have squeezed garlic for all it's worth, and it continues to be amazingly productive in terms of new discoveries and new chemicals.”

And you thought that gar-

THE OTHER SIDE

lic was only good for spaghetti sauce (and for warding off the occasional vampire). Crystal gazers, eat your hearts out!

—A.R. Morlar

GRAVEYARD SHIFT

Body snatching has become something of an epidemic in the suburb of Indianapolis known as Hendricks County; as many as fifteen corpses have been stolen from the cemeteries of the town since September. It's a highly unorthodox problem which has caused police Detective Michael Nelson to take some rather unorthodox measures to solve the case.

In a county where satanic cults have flourished for several years, this recent outburst is even more outrageous than most. According to an article in *The Wall Street Journal*, the bodies stolen were taken from closed cemeteries, dating back to the late 1800s. The bodies may have been stolen for the jewelry that was commonly buried with them in those days, but some of the cults' more bizarre and exotic practices have lead Lt. Nelson to a more macabre conclusion.

At least three different cults are known to exist in Hendricks County, one with membership of over one hundred. Some of the covens are so bold as to advertise in the local newspapers for skulls and the like to use in their rituals (a human skull, according to Nelson, can net as much as four hundred dollars). Local cult leaders

were therefore among the first people Nelson questioned. He also spoke with a local character who goes by the name Merlin the Enchanter.

Merlin, who lives sixty miles from Hendricks and publishes a newsletter called "The Graverobber's Gazette," offered his help when he heard of the robberies and told Nelson what to expect if the cults were responsible. "They're probably going to be sacrificing animals (soon), which can get messy," he said, a claim supported by the numerous reports of animal sacrifices and the charred remains of animals found in local graveyards. "The best thing to stop them

is to just tell them you're going to cast a spell on them," said Merlin. "You'll get your bodies back."

But the bodies have not come back, and because of his involvement in the case, Nelson has had to spend most of his time following up on leads about body snatching and related crimes. Following a tip that there might be a human sacrifice, Nelson once sat outside a graveyard keeping watch all night long. A group of local volunteer firemen staked out the surrounding graveyards to help out in case the sacrifice occurred elsewhere. "I was wearing a gun," Nelson said, "but I thought I'd have

done better if I had a crucifix."

As of the beginning of this year, the cases were still unsolved. The whole matter has changed Nelson's life, though: in his office he now has a book about witchcraft as well as a carved wooden face he found in a graveyard. And he has rapidly become the county's resident expert on skullduggery.

"I get these calls from people who want me to come out and talk to them," he said. He rarely follows them up, and when he does he's more than a little nervous. Nelson admits to being concerned that he's "going to go out there and just . . . disappear."

—Robert Simpson



THE OTHER SIDE

THE "ZONE VOTE"



LAURIE AND THE DUKE: Has Dukakis locked up the "witch vote?"

As America's best and brightest politicians scour the countryside in search of undecided voters to persuade, we here in the Twilight Zone have followed the Presidential campaign with a great deal of interest and more than a little confusion. We decided it was our responsibility to discover which candidate would best represent the Twilight Zone. Suggestions ranged from our current President (for his imaginative economic and social policies), to televangelist Jimmy Swaggart (for giving new meaning to the word "fantasy"), to former California Governor Jerry "Moonbeam" Brown, who was last seen in Zen monk's robes, washing the feet of the poor in India. Finally, one of us (me) was assigned to answer the question definitively. Now, after extensive research, I believe I have identified a candidate whom all those in the Twilight Zone can feel peculiar about voting for. And, as the saying goes, he was right here in front of us all the time.

The candidate is Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis. Why? Well, as some of you might remember from our interview with Laurie Cabot (June 1987), he was the one who bestowed the honorary title of "Official Witch of Salem" upon her in 1977.

Frankly, I was a bit surprised that the press had missed this one. In a year in which skeletons are being torn, screaming, from their closets, in which questions about marital fidelity, academic and military records, use of controlled substances, and knowledge (or lack thereof) of government malfeasance have hobbled promising careers, I wondered what effect this revelation would have on Dukakis's candidacy. On the one hand, it might draw the fire of the fundamentalists. On the other hand, would you want to have the "witch vote" against you?

It wasn't until I tried to reach Governor Dukakis for a comment that I remembered that, in certain ways, Washington, D.C., is the very heart of the Twilight Zone. (Mr. Dukakis's National Headquarters referred me to his Massa-

chusetts headquarters, which connected me with "Issues," which, in turn, referred me to the State House, where I was connected with the Press Secretary's office, only to be told "I'm sorry, Mr. Dorsey's been in and out all day.") As of this writing, I have been unable to elicit any official response, other than the person who said, with a chuckle, "I'll connect you with 'Issues' ... they ought to get a kick out of this."

There are times in every journalist's life when you hit a brick wall, when your mettle

and integrity are tested to the limit. I was determined to get to the bottom of the story. I thought of Woodward and Bernstein, and pressed on.

I phoned Laurie Cabot.

She was very gracious, explaining that Governor Dukakis had issued the proclamation in recognition of her service to the community. (Wicca is a recognized religion in Massachusetts, and Cabot and the two-thousand-member Council of Isis are involved in a number of charitable organizations, most of which benefit children.)

When we asked her for her views about the current election campaign, she expressed her concern with the level of involvement of Christian fundamentalists in this year's Presidential campaign, especially in the light of the widespread misconception that witches are Satan-worshippers. Cabot's organization, the Witches' League for Public Awareness, is working hard to correct the "Wicked Witch of the West" mentality she feels is responsible for the persecution of her faith.

But what candidate does she support? Basically, she confessed, she's just as confused as we were. Although she likes Governor Dukakis, she's still not sure who she'll vote for. "Though I like what Jesse has to say," she added.

Back here in the Twilight Zone, we finally decided that no matter who wins the election in November, one thing is certain: whoever it is will find themselves in a real Twilight Zone come January 21st.

—David W. Dow